

**SYMPTOMATIC IDENTITIES: LOVESICKNESS AND THE NINETEENTH-
CENTURY BRITISH NOVEL**

A Dissertation

by

LAURA KAY CHESHER

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2006

Major Subject: English

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ABSTRACT

Symptomatic Identities: Lovesickness and the Nineteenth-Century British Novel.

(May 2006)

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Lovesickness is a common malady in British literature, but it is also an illness that has been perceived and diagnosed differently in different eras. The nineteenth-century British novel incorporates a lovesickness that primarily affects women with physical symptoms, including fever, that may end in a female character's death. The fever of female lovesickness includes a delirium that allows a female character to play out the identity crisis she must feel at the loss of a significant relationship and possibly of her social status. Commonly conflated with a type of female madness, the nineteenth-century novelists often focus less on the delirium and more on the physical symptoms of illness that affect a female character at the loss of love. These physical symptoms require physical care from other characters and often grant the heroine status and comfort.

Jane Austen, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Charles Dickens all use subtle variations in lovesickness to identify the presence or absence of a female character's virtue. Jane Austen established lovesickness as a necessary experience for female characters, who choose only if they reveal or conceal their symptoms to a watchful public. Elizabeth Gaskell established both a comic socially constructed lovesickness in which a female character can participate if she is aware of popular culture and a spontaneous lovesickness that affects socially unaware female characters and leads to death. Charles

Dickens establishes lovesickness as culturally pervasive by writing a female character who stages lovesickness for the purpose of causing pain to others and a female character who is immune to lovesickness and the rhetoric of love, yet is consistently spoken into others' love stories. Lovesickness becomes a barometer of the soul in several nineteenth-century novels by which we read a heroine's virtue or lack of virtue and the depth of her loss.

To my family

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CHAPTER I

SYMPTOMATIC IDENTITIES: THE INFLUENCE OF FEVERISH LOVESICKNESS IN THE SHAPING OF SOCIAL EXPECTATION OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL

Standing in Texas A&M University's Evans Library checkout line, I overheard a library worker inform the patron in front of me that one of her books, *Surviving the Breakup*, was overdue. I was struck by the continuation into the twenty-first century of a figure by which I was fascinated in the nineteenth; namely, the discussion of the loss of love as illness and, equally, the discussion of being jilted as life threatening. Novelists from the nineteenth century wrote female characters who had lost love as understanding themselves in a potentially long-lasting and non-specific illness: one that proved them to be deserving of care. This illness allows the female character to substitute the identity of an invalid for her identity as the beloved, and as her symptoms often include fever, her new identity allows her to play out the experience of an identity crisis in a delirium caused by the fever. The lovesick character can define herself in relation to the man who jilted her, which seems counterproductive since he is no longer in her life; however, her symptomatic identity allows her to establish herself as deserving of care as it allows her to proclaim herself misused and still in love. While the minor symptoms of lovesickness can be faked, the life-threatening fever associated with lovesickness requires the diagnosis and treatment of a doctor. While fever is no longer associated with loss of love, the title of a book about broken relationships in the twenty-first century is still focused on "survival." Instead of projecting a happy and confident person who is no

This dissertation follows the style of *The Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*.

longer in love with the person who jilted her and who is ready to love another person, the title book about the aftermath of a significant relationship focuses on the “breakup,” the past, the removed love, and the scene of pain in what seems to be a counter-productive manner. Of course, describing loss of love may be a discursive trap: if the only valid means of discussing lost love is through a figure of physical or spiritual sickness, the author of a book about distancing oneself from a relationship may only be able to do so in a recovery narrative. To write love in a recovery text, an author must write those who have lost love in relation to sickness.

While my discussion of lovesickness will focus on women in the nineteenth century, an orientation of nineteenth-century female lovesickness in the larger framework of the history of lovesickness in Europe seems useful. Mary Frances Wack writes a comprehensive history of medieval lovesickness that traces the change in European perceptions of lovesickness after Constantine the African introduced the *Viaticum* in the tenth century, and several European authors wrote commentaries for it. The most abundant early textual references to love and sickness are Greek,¹ but many of these texts were lost to Europe at the fall of the Roman empire until Constantine shipped Arabic medical writings based upon the Greek understanding of lovesickness to Italy (Wack 5). The limited texts² on which Europe based their concepts of lovesickness presented lovesickness as a disease that afflicted men, who were caught up in “unfulfilled, sometimes unspeakable desire that may be incestuous or otherwise socially unacceptable” (Wack 5). The lovesick man’s body reveals to a clever doctor through symptoms of “[s]ighing, sleeplessness, and wasting from refusal to eat” (Wack 5) what

his mind will not let him say. In the tenth century Constantine's *Viaticum* was reintroduced to Europe, and the Greek understanding of lovesickness was incorporated into the European understanding of the disease by the eleventh century (Wack 6). The Greeks saw lovesickness as "love intensified beyond proper measure [which is] a form of madness" (Wack 6), and in Galenic terms, Constantine explains the seat of lovesickness to be the brain. Wack suggests, "The disease of love, according to medieval physicians, is a disorder of the mind and body, closely related to melancholia and potentially fatal if not treated. In their view, however, lovesickness did not afflict everyone alike: the sufferer was typically thought to be a noble man" (xi). Wack records the treatments commonly applied to the upper-class, lovesick man as "a regimen designed to restore the body's strength and to distract the mind from its obsession. Baths, good food, wine, and sleep insured the return of physical vigor, while therapeutic intercourse, business affairs, legal difficulties, real or concocted, and various types of sports and games" (Wack xii) would provide distraction from the lost love. The lovesick man's emotions were no more important than his ability to function normally in upper-class society. Wack sees the perpetuation of ideas of lovesickness in medieval culture in both fiction and non-fiction sources as significant, noting, "What we can only document as a literary fantasy of love in the early twelfth century becomes a well-attested social reality by the fourteenth.... medical, literary, artistic, and religious sources ... show how the medical notion of lovesickness influenced the transformation of 'courtly love' from literary convention to social practice" (Wack xv). Over time, the idea of men falling ill

for lack of the object of their obsession became universally accepted as true, and lovesickness became a masculine social problem.

By the seventeenth century, doctors generated their treatments for lovesickness from several different medieval theories about the disease. Incorporating competing theories into one self-help book about healing oneself from ruined love, Jacques Ferrand wrote the exhaustive *Of Lovesickness or Erotic Melancholy: An Unusual Discourse that Teaches How to Recognize the Essence, the Causes, the Signs, and the Remedies of this Disease of the Fantasy*, including previous beliefs about lovesickness from various cultures. This treatise combined different ideologies about the nature and cause of lovesickness³ into one all-encompassing account, and Ferrand integrated “the parallel literary and mythological lore into the medical modes of discourse” (Beecher and Ciavolella 10). This treatise was written in a lay tradition that sought to aid the afflicted with “the self-curing of love” (Beecher and Ciavolella 8). Ferrand’s treatise discussed “[a]ny sexual behavior perceived to be pathological in its origins” (Beecher and Ciavolella 10-11), and “erotic melancholy became the organizing *topos* The imprudence of some of his choices of *topoi* ... brought his first treatise under the scrutiny of the ecclesiastical censors, for many of these were forbidden subjects; in 1620 all known copies of that treatise were called in for burning” (Beecher and Ciavolella 11). The censorship of a book about lovesickness in the seventeenth century reveals that in social expectations about love, the connection between lovesickness and sexuality was seen as titillation and cause for shame. That the discussion of a disease elicited a protective moral response reveals that lovesickness was still connected to the socially

unacceptable. While literary texts abound from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance depicting male and female lovesick characters (Wack 174), writing that defines lovesickness as a social reality is seen as dangerous – most likely because the writing establishes as real the power of an exciting desire to thwart social conventions and create forbidden relationships.

Ferrand wrote about lovesickness in a manner that the censors deemed unacceptable for his intended reader. After Ferrand's book geared to self-help is banned, he republishes his work in a new edition from the perspective of the medical establishment. This edition is not banned. Anything discussed that is distasteful is assumed to be necessary for the sake of the physician's ability to diagnose and treat patients accurately; "Ferrand's challenge in rewriting the work lay precisely in separating the inherently offensive content from that which was frank but necessary, or from that which was part of his medical world order and, for the sake of truth, could not be suppressed" (Beecher and Ciavolella 11). Early modern lovesickness is a disease that is seen and diagnosed by a third party, often a physician, who detects the patient's love with or without the patient's help (Ferrand 266). Ferrand establishes lovesickness as a disorder that affects one part of the body and is caused by another; "I hold as a salient point that in erotic melancholy the brain is the diseased part, while the heart is the seat of the cause of the disease" (257). Most of Ferrand's exhaustive treatise on lovesickness focuses on the disease as it is experienced by men. However, Ferrand does incorporate female lovesickness into his discussion, actually claiming, "women are more frequently

and more grievously troubled by these ills than are men” (229). Ferrand acknowledges the long list of symptoms that are derived from female experiences with lovesickness.

Such love gives rise to a pale and wan complexion, joined by a slow fever that modern practitioners call amorous fever, to palpitations of the heart, swelling of the face, depraved appetite, a sense of grief, sighing, causeless tears, insatiable hunger, raging thirst, fainting, oppressions, suffocations, insomnia, headaches, melancholy, epilepsy, madness, uterine fury, satyriasis, and other pernicious symptoms that are, for the most part, without mitigation or cure other than through the [established medical] remedies for love and erotic melancholy. (Ferrand 229)

The first symptoms listed of this early modern female lovesickness relate to complexion and fever: both circulatory matters. Ferrand’s list continues to span a diverse and confusing set of symptoms that express the lack of medical understanding about how this disorder affects women. What is clear is that in an era in which lovesickness carries social stigma and must be diagnosed by a medical practitioner, a remarkably wide-ranging set of presenting symptoms left open the potential for women to be misdiagnosed or to fake this malady.

By the seventeenth century, a shift has occurred in the perception of lovesickness. Even though he devotes only a few pages to women in his text, Ferrand establishes that lovesickness is more commonly seen in women and that women are more frequently troubled by it. The reason for part of this shift may be elaborated in Ferrand’s own text. In the chapter entitled “Whether love in women is greater and

therefore worse than in men,” Ferrand writes, “a greater number of women [are] witless, maniacal, and frantic from love than men—for men are far less reduced to such extremities, unless they are effeminate courtiers, nourished on a life of riot and excess and on the breast of courtesans” (311). Focusing his book on male lovesickness, Ferrand locates the disease in femininity and marks the man with a predisposition to presenting the symptoms of lovesickness as “effeminate.” Understanding lovesickness to be a problem of femininity, Ferrand devotes most of his treatise to male experiences of lovesickness. Wack claims, “men’s lovesickness needed explanation and cure because it made them ‘other.’ Its signs and symptoms feminized them, separated them from normal masculine ways of behaving. But the same signs and symptoms would only render a woman more feminine. Since they only reinforced what was perceived in nature, they required no diagnosis or cure” (175). Susceptible to a feminizing disease, women do not need cure as much as men. In her book *Illness as a Work of Thought*, Monica Greco discusses medical thought as a social construct. She reads illness as a product of “social constructionism, where these forms of knowledge appear contingent and embedded in a field of power relations: concepts of illness are always, in this sense, the work of thought” (Greco 5). Seventeenth-century writings about lovesickness needed to be distanced from the perspective of the lovesick person in order to pass ecclesiastical censorship. The censors understood ideologies of lovesickness to contain a power that they did not wish to see in the hands of lay people. A self-help text on lovesickness would provide a means to speak one’s desire in the name of self-diagnosis and could provide a means of breaking social norms in order to fulfill one’s desire in the name of

self-cure. Lovesickness could provide an attractive (or tempting) social identity to the lovesick sufferer—one who needs one's desires met so he will not die.

By the eighteenth century, ecclesiastical censors no longer barred the layperson from information about maladies of love, and male lovesickness is no longer discussed as dangerous. Far from needing to be protected from the idea that sexuality could be pathological, the British had been fixated on distinguishing normal from abnormal sexual behavior (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 12). Monica Greco argues that the medicalization of sex is what enabled influential types of femininity to exist; "The solidification of the truth of sex into scientific knowledge allowed for the specification of individuals into types, for the indexing of identities in relation to 'normal' measures" (25-6). The lovesick woman is one such common British type. Helen Small notes,

Stories about women who go mad when they lose their lovers were extraordinarily popular during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, attracting novelists, poets, dramatists, musicians, painters, and sculptors. The subject was by no means new, as any reader of Shakespeare knows, but with the cult of sensibility it took on an unprecedented importance. The representative figure of madness ceased to be the madman in chains and became instead the woman whose insanity was an extension of her female condition. (vii)

Lovemadness becomes a common illness for heroines in the British novel, and by the nineteenth century, women are much more prone to endure dangerous forms of lovesickness than men, but their disease is exhibited in physical as well as psychological

manifestations. The nineteenth-century love story is intimately bound together by illness, which means that to be in love in the nineteenth century is to have a story with two equally important components: a romantic tale and a medical history. If the romance is successful, the medical history will be a tale of female health or female recovery from ill health, and if the romance is unsuccessful, the medical history will contain an ineffective medical establishment and possibly a poignant and courageous death.

Of course, the nineteenth-century love story greatly affects the nineteenth-century novel, the heroine of which is written as participating in a traditional love story, containing the dual genre components of romantic tale and medical history. Novelists draw their readership into experiences with love that are entirely rhetorical. They write the experience of love, and in the novel, love does not exist apart from the words of female illness that recount it. The bodies of female characters are read into larger, ongoing social stories around them. Heroines in Austen, Gaskell, and Dickens have relationships with men in narratives that reveal the most minute body language. As love and sickness both become necessary parts of the novel, the female body becomes an object of intense focus. Pamela K. Gilbert writes, “The body, our most basic cultural unit of enclosure and difference between self and other, is a text in which this drama of colliding and blending surfaces is written and read” (2). The female body becomes the medium upon which nineteenth-century love between a man and a woman is written.

Lovesickness is written into the novel as a bodily illness in conjunction with a love or an erotic relationship through a catalogue of symptoms that the heroine experiences, including inability to eat, inability to sleep, crying, preoccupation with

herself, and ultimately fever. Novelists use lovesickness to injure a heroine in a way that garners her sympathy, status, and care in a luxurious mourning that is also rewarding. Spontaneous lovesickness, an uncalculated and incomprehensible contraction of sickness after being jilted, occurs in a female character who is powerless, poor, and unaware of being the object of social interest in the story of love, while sophisticated lovesickness, a calculated and often manipulative contraction of the symptoms of illness after being jilted, is seen in the female character who has some power and is aware of her presence in the important story of nineteenth-century woman. The lovesick woman is seen to have an innate value by other characters if not by the man who jilts her because of her relation to the love story. The character who is aware of the power of the symptoms of lovesickness can regulate the behavior of those around her. The lovesick woman can be given a reason to live if she can see herself in a defining relationship with another person: a new lover, a child, or God.

Not limiting his study to the nineteenth-century, Roland Barthes in *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* establishes that love can no longer be written without the female body. He records the expressions of love and provides a useful measure of how the language of love shapes the experience of lovers. Barthes notes that he cannot truly write the experience of love: "to try to write love is to confront the muck of language: that region of hysteria where language is both too much and too little" (99). Barthes chooses to discuss the "muck of language." Muck is compost, a breaking down or degeneration of language, and a fertile source for producing language. Barthes describes this muck in the terms of nineteenth-century female sickness: a "region of hysteria." Unable to define

love in words, Barthes tries merely to contain it because to write love is to go to a “region,” and the region in which he locates love is a uterus that is too overwhelmed by and rejecting of normal behavior. Barthes describes all lovers as trapped by a hysterical language.

While Barthes defines the lover’s use of the language of love as an exercise with a conventional and hysterical rhetoric, he describes the loss of love in much more physical terms. Barthes genders the role of the one who loses her lover; “historically, the discourse of absence is carried on by the Woman” (13). So, discourse that Barthes reads culture to have already feminized, the language of love located in the wandering womb, is now embodied in his text as a woman. Women speak absence, so the body of the jilted party is female. Barthes locates the loss of love in the feminized body, and the physical reality of lost love is not just rhetorical. Barthes defines the capacity of those who have lost love to produce for those around them visible signs of that loss as *askesis*, an ascetic behavior of self-punishment (32). *Askesis* is blackmail; it is the lover saying, “see what you have made of me” (32); a “look at me” addressed to the other (33). This behavior is powerful, pleasurable, and a trap. Any fissure of devotion is a fault; one would be guilty if one tried to lighten the burden (118). Thus, health is not just a sign of starting over or of “surviving the breakup” but is a sign of not truly loving in the first place. Recovery proves that, as a lover, one did not mean the always-extreme rhetoric of love. Of course, if one remains trapped in the extreme rhetoric of love, then far more serious physical consequences occur. Barthes provides a list of the various symptoms of lovesickness that can cause death; “the lover who doesn’t forget sometimes dies of

excess, exhaustion, and tension of memory” (14). Ultimately, the inability to escape the language of love leads to death, and the figure of the loss of love is the lifeless female body.

What Barthes astutely points to is a phenomenon of language of which nineteenth-century novelists were very much aware. Language shapes how we experience love and how others understand our experience with love because we are compelled to think and to tell our stories in words already established by tradition. The object of affection is important because s/he creates a need for the lover to express how good love is and how good s/he is with love and the language of love. It is the experience of being in love the subject loves, not the object (Barthes 31). Barthes argues that the loved being is an image, single and coalescent; the beloved is not a text that is heterologic (112), which means that the loved one does not represent her own desires, only what the lover sees in her. The loved being is image, not voice. While the nineteenth-century heroine does use her lover’s body as a mirror upon which to read her understanding of his desires (thus, her desirability), her understanding of his persistence (thus, her receptivity), and her understanding of his suit (thus, her type of femininity: is she too languid, too eager, too coy, or too straightforward), the nineteenth-century novelist does create a heterologic text out of the female body. The lover may be read and interpreted into many competing stories by the narrator, the lady, and other characters. Barthes’s argument that the loved object is singular and determined by the lover may be true in the interiorization of love in a heroine’s life and identity, but the love of the nineteenth-century novel is complicated by the reader’s access to the simultaneous

insights of multiple characters. The reader is not trapped by the heroine's interiorizations, which is why in some instances, the reader may actually be called upon to judge some characters' use of their love relationships in social wrangling.

When novelists in the nineteenth century incorporate lovesickness into their texts, they do so in order to confuse rather than to define the nature of female love. The characters who get lovesick often display traits that predispose them to lovesickness. A woman with a lack of power or limited control over her own life is a woman who will experience the kind of love that ends in lovesickness. A relationship based upon unequal power and unequal love teaches a woman to devalue her sense of self and to assume her lover's sense of who she is; she can become the lover's image of love that Barthes describes. A devaluing love in the nineteenth-century novel makes a heroine introspective, which in turn makes love a prime contributor to identity formation: the establishment of a female body in the context of the world around her.⁴ Gilbert notes, "What we do, feel, believe, know is as embodied beings. The body, uncertainly poised between nature and culture, practices and signifies identity. It is the fundamental trope of human experience" (15). The impact of devaluing oneself in everyone's eyes but one's suitor's is disastrous, leaving a jilted lady without the support needed to re-establish a healthy self-esteem.

The loss of identity underlying lovesickness is best rendered in a delirious and emotional break with reality as produced by a fever. Lovesickness that takes the form of fever renders the lovesick woman pitiable to those around her. The rhetoric of love and the dedication of oneself to one great love is so attractive that even when that love turns

out to have been a lie, a woman might compromise her identity to the perpetuation of the myth: incubating disease to maintain herself as one who loves. Lost love is an idea to which a character can devote herself and an idea that will never let her down. There is power, pleasure, and authorship in the telling of the stories of love and the stories of thwarted love for novelists and characters in nineteenth-century novels. A female character can create the narrative that she wishes to embody, reveling in the story and turning herself into a text for those around her to read. The impact of illness as a social construct that participates in identity formation is profound. Greco argues, “The (self-) fashioning of the subject always involves and/or implies a *diagnosis*: an articulation in thought of the present state of affairs, and of what the subject should do or should be in relation to it. And therefore this fashioning implies the reference to a form of ‘truth’, to propositions deemed to have a certain authority” (Greco 19). Establishing identity in lovesickness means articulating desire in diagnosis. One needs the authority of disease to be able to explain one’s self. Diagnosis by the medical establishment is a means by which the author establishes the difference between a lovesick female character who is in danger from disease from one who is manipulating those around her. In an interview at the University of Virginia, Foucault referred to “technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality” (18). According to Foucault, the female characters or novelists who are aware of the influence of the love story on their participation in

lovesickness are making of lovesickness a technology of the self: the tool that allows them to act on their bodies, thoughts, and conduct in order to refashion and write themselves into the social context they desire, reorienting themselves or their female characters into otherwise impossible relationships.

While many traits of lovesickness are universal and contribute to an idea that lovesickness in the novel is establishing an uncontested definition of femininity, the nineteenth-century novelists write a femininity that is problematized by social forces that compete to define the nature of love and the nature of femininity. Foucault notes, “contact between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self [is] governmentality” (19). Governmentality is seen in the nineteenth-century novel when a female character defines or diagnoses herself according to a set of assumption about illness and truth that turn out not to be true. The nineteenth-century novelists who incorporate lovesickness as a literary tradition in which female characters are compliant in lovesickness rather than falling victim to it allow a reconceptualization of lovesickness and of femininity in their readers. Foucault notes, “people accept as truth, as evidence, some themes which have been built up at a certain moment during history, and [...] this so-called evidence can be criticized and destroyed. To change something in the minds of people—that’s the role of an intellectual” (Martin 10). Foucault makes it possible to provide a label for the nineteenth-century novelists who use lovesickness to expand the belief systems of the reader, to criticize or destroy the thoughts or systems that are socially limiting. The nineteenth-century novelists who write lovesickness into their texts in order to change social perception are, in effect, Foucauldian intellectuals.

The nineteenth-century British novelists assign moral judgment to disease. The lovesick woman can be written as morally suspect or morally superior. The nineteenth-century novelist does not just use the story of lovesickness to establish a female character's identity in the text, but to influence the reader's identity as well. Gilbert writes, "Fiction, like contagion, might become the vehicle by which important physical boundaries were breached: distinctions between subject and object, upper and lower bodily strata, upper and lower class, masculine and feminine, food and filth, mother and whore" (36). Novelists understood their works as objects that could create social change. Gilbert states that

the text is a substance that enters the reader and has an effect on him or her. The text is not an inert thing to be merely manipulated, it is active – even opportunistic. In the context of the nineteenth-century's twin terrors – epidemic disease and revolution, the disintegration of the physical and social body – these metaphors took on a particular role, one in which they were able to body forth the Victorians' fear of biological and social dissolution. (18-9)

The nineteenth-century reader does not become lovesick but is sympathetic to and fearful of lovesickness. Female characters are sometimes aware of their being read by others and sometimes are not. However, the novelists who write them are aware of the need for the female character's body to say the right thing to fit in with a story that allows the reader to condemn or absolve that character of her behavior. The lovesick heroine must encounter the social guilt of gaining power and status through illness—a

power and status that the nineteenth-century novelist uses to change social perceptions of femininity, health, and love.

As I suggest in Chapter I, “Elinor’s Health and Marianne’s Illness: Lovesickness as Social Code,” in her novels *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma*, Jane Austen creates a variation of nineteenth-century lovesickness in which the love story is so culturally pervasive that a female character in her novel has no choice but to participate in conventional lovesickness and the nineteenth-century fixation on the love story, but she can choose whether or not she displays or conceals the symptoms of lovesickness on her body. Austen pits one cultural assumption about female love against another, destabilizing the possibility of a normative experience for women in love. The love story that is pervasive amongst Austen’s female characters contains a marriage plot, thus a love story that does not lead to marriage severely strains a heroine’s sense of self. Women in Austen’s novels are aware of being watched and are aware that the face they present to the public is a choice. Since they must choose which face to present to society, they must consider which face they desire to present: the language of lost love equals the language of self discovery.

The Austenian love story is a recovery narrative, so love is related to sickness and is often diagnosed by the heroine herself. Diagnosing love sickens the nineteenth-century understanding of love and makes novelistic love the sickness a female character hopes to catch. Lovesickness provides Austenian characters isolation when discussion of their symptoms or feelings worsens those symptoms, and lovesickness alternately provides meddling when other characters believe that some medical intervention is

needed to alleviate a character's suffering. Austen establishes lovesickness in her novels as an identity crisis that can be treated with a rhetorical cure that re-establishes the lovesick heroine in social connection to a family who loves her; however, Austen also establishes that a purely physical illness can be given the significance of lovesickness, when the lovesick heroine or the characters around her assign an arbitrary illness with the full psychological and symbolic weight of the love story. If a girl who has been jilted dies of a severe cold, then she would really have succumbed to lovesick suicide or lovesick neglect. The social contract that requires a female character to show symptoms of physical distress before she warrants emotional or physical support from others allows some female characters to hide a broken heart behind the veil of good health, but it also keeps those characters from soliciting the support they might need if they are unwilling or unable to play the invalid. Austen's female characters are judged by their narrators to be morally right or morally wrong according to a set of parameters that tell what each character's motives are for revealing or concealing her symptoms of lovesickness.

Chapter II of this dissertation, "Perpetually Lovesick: The Social Benefit of Displaced Lovesickness," argues that in *Ruth* Elizabeth Gaskell presents her readership with two different types of female lovesickness. Both types of lovesickness occur in working-class women, but one is comedic and the other spiritually uplifting. Comedic lovesickness occurs when a female character is aware of the cultural love story in which she is supposed to participate and in which she desires to participate, and when she must manipulate a non-romantic experience with the opposite sex and the marriage plot with the traditional code of love and lovesickness. This comedic lovesickness underscores the

attractiveness of lovesickness by providing an example of a healthy woman making herself feel the symptoms of ill-health for the sake of being able to re-imagine herself as something other and more romantic than she is. The lovesick woman has the power to re-code her relationship with a man in the language of and according to the story of love that would rewrite her as culturally important and heroically self-sacrificing. The other type of lovesickness that Gaskell incorporates into this novel is not farcical and is not the heroine's choice. It is the unavoidable and spontaneous bodily response to the loss of love. The heroine who undergoes this more serious lovesickness is not aware of any cultural interest in the love story, nor does she feel a need to conform to it. Unlike Austen's female characters who fully embody lovesickness, Gaskell's seriously lovesick female character does not embrace a lack of self-care as a sign that she needs care; she is rendered incapable of helping herself. The woman who is susceptible to serious lovesickness in a Gaskell novel may have inherited a predisposition to sicken in response to emotional scenarios; she may be lower-class, pretty, unprotected, outside the discourse of propriety, and without aid if she were to become ill. Lovesickness elevates the reader's understanding of a female character's social class. Gaskell uses this trait to confuse Victorian ideals of class and ability to sicken, allowing her lovesick characters to bridge the gap between classes and to perform Victorian social work.

Unlike Austen's sickening love that must be diagnosed to exist, Gaskell presents her reader with an understanding of love as health and, therefore, of the loss of love as illness to the woman without social power. Gaskell's lovesick woman sickens in response to her lover's pain or illness, but can ward off symptoms in order to act for her

lover's good. When she is no longer useful to her lover, the lovesick woman exhibits the symptoms of lovesickness on her body and is granted the concern and care of others.

When a lovesick woman has fully lost her love, she becomes entirely focused on herself and has a death wish. In a similar manner to Austen's rhetorical cure, the lovesick woman according to Gaskell can be pulled out of her self-centeredness and given a reason to live if others convince her that she is in a defining relationship with someone else worth living for. Thus, the lovesick woman's story becomes the story of recovery or the story of dormant lovesickness. Gaskell's dormant lovesick woman continues to feel love, even passionate love, in other relationships in her life: passionate maternal or passionate Christian love. The lovesick woman may live because of other relationships in her life, but she is capable of passing on lovesickness to her offspring, in whom lovesickness is also physical, permanent, and related to identity formation.

The ability to sicken for love is a gauge by which the female heart is read in a Gaskell text. Lovesickness enables a woman to continue to have her story told even after she falls, a heroine's cultural salvation both justified and assured by her ability to sicken again and again for love. Gaskell's lovesick woman is capable of great change, which is why Gaskell's lovesick woman is the Victorian social worker who exposes the Victorian Christian propensity to systematically treat lower-class sinners as a caste of hardened rebels from God's will. Gaskell's perpetually lovesick woman allows Victorian society to re-imagine itself as willing to look at the human heart before casting sinners off to social institutions: workhouses or penitentiaries. Lovesickness is a barometer of a

woman's soul that reveals the lovesick woman's loving nature and value to society, even as it eventually kills her.

As I discuss in Chapter III, "Unfeeling Hearts and Monstrous Women: Displaced Lovesickness and the Social Curse of the Lovesick Woman in Dickens' *Great Expectations*," Charles Dickens refuses to incorporate a medically established physical lovesickness in a woman who is jilted, focusing the reader's attention on the staging and speaking of lovesickness. Thus, the lovesick woman is revealed to be both calculating of the spectacle she produces for others and watchful of others' reaction to her. The lovesick woman is aware of the power of her symptoms and uses that power to regulate the behavior of those around her. Dickens establishes a similarly lovesick mother and loveless daughter as both outside the nineteenth-century social love story for women and as both relentlessly re-oriented in it to their detriment. The lovesick woman who is cruelly jilted on her wedding day is violently thrust out of the marriage plot, yet her constant replacement of the artifacts of lost love around her lead to her continual association with the marriage plot and her humiliation at being unable to fulfill it. She re-enacts a grotesque femininity that roots her identity in the marriage plot as it denies her ever having an actual marriage to plot into her own story. The daughter of the grotesquely lovesick woman is raised inside a thwarted marriage plot, destined for a marriage plot of her own, and yet is taught to thwart the marriage plot of all the men she sees until she fulfills her own love story. This daughter understands love only as a form of words, a language convention. She does not understand how the language of love could actually touch one's heart. Dickens's grotesquely lovesick woman and her

loveless daughter are both women who define themselves according to a cultural love story that they do not fulfill.

Unlike Gaskell's comic lovesick woman, Dickens's female characters who do not love and yet who depend upon the cultural love story to define themselves do not enact farce. The male character who tries to protect these women may find the choice to live in an aberrant relationship with the story of love to be limiting, morally despicable, and blighting of those around them. The grotesquely lovesick woman grows tired of her participation in lovesickness, but she finds the participation too valuable to stop; she desires to control how others read her death and thus how others evaluate the guilt of the man who jilted her. The ability to perpetuate herself as lovesick and to be a curse on the man who jilted her is too attractive for her to choose a normal life instead.

The nineteenth-century novelist empowers him or herself to confront contemporary social understandings of heterosexual love, illness, and the female body through a sophisticated incorporation of lovesickness in the text. The novelists reveal how the need to diagnose the loss of love makes lovesickness more than a biological disease. Lovesickness becomes the means of establishing female identity as something that must be read in relation to the marriage plot. Sophisticated female characters who are aware that lovesickness is a means of establishing themselves into a social context with the man they desire make of lovesickness a technology of the self. Heroines can use lovesickness to change their bodies, their thoughts, and their conduct until they have determined their identity in relation to one powerful love, even if the lover ends the relationship and the female character's identity as jilted becomes blighting of the

heroine's personal health or happiness. Heroines who understand lovesickness as a technology of the self must negotiate social guilt for gaining power and status and care through their illness. The three novelists discussed in this dissertation all make lovesickness a technology of the self as well. The novelists may present certain characters as naturally succumbing to lovesickness and other characters as participating in lovesickness for their own good, but they all understand that they can attach a moral to nineteenth-century lovesickness, and they use lovesickness to shape the lives of female characters as they hope that the lives of their female characters will shape their readers' attitudes and social expectations.

CHAPTER II

ELINOR'S HEALTH AND MARIANNE'S ILLNESS: LOVESICKNESS AS SOCIAL CODE

Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* is noted for its presentation of opposites. Marianne and Elinor Dashwood, the sister heroines of the novel, experience similar disappointments in love, yet they respond to the same set of social expectations with opposite behaviors and attitudes – both in the belief that they are following the most socially acceptable and established form of behavior. Barbara M. Benedict has noted the reader's identification with both heroines at different moments in the text as a seeming breakdown of the novel's structure.⁵ Austen, well known for her novels of manners, includes sympathetic presentations of several social mores concerning lovesickness in this novel and does not privilege one consistent ideology of proper lovesickness by the end of the text. However, it is this very friction in Austen's novel that interests me. Austen presents several different nineteenth-century cultural assumptions about women in love and refuses to gloss over the contradictions in those assumptions. In so doing, she establishes that nineteenth-century cultural assumptions about women in love, while powerful, inevitably break under the strain of other equally established assumptions about women and sickness, women and propriety, and women and their acceptance of hospitality. What Austen creates in *Sense and Sensibility* is a space where readers face their own prejudices about the nature of women and love, finding, just like Elinor and Marianne Dashwood do, that those assumptions are not unequivocally true.

The means by which Austen confuses, rather than defines, the nature of female love in this text is by her writing one cultural assumption in direct contradiction to another of equal importance to text and reader. Since Austen typically presents marriage plots to her readership, she sets up social understandings of the primary love relationship between a man and a woman, and in this novel, she reveals the chaos that ensues when participants and onlookers have contradictory social expectations of love. Not only do contrasting expectations of love strain the heterosexual couple, but facing the knowledge that love does not equate to marriage seriously strains the Austenian heroine's sense of self. Austen's heroines understand themselves as surfaces to be read—and read into the marriage plot. When the Austenian text denies its heroine marriage, revision of self takes place. It is at this moment in the text that Austen demands that her heroines function as daughters, sisters, friends, and members of society without the integration into a couple that they have been expecting. They are read by those around them, they are aware that they are being read, and they are aware that the face they present to the public is a choice.

When Austen presents us with an understanding of the body as a thing to be read, she is illuminating an understanding of the body that was already centuries old and yet still embedded in conduct book ideology and literature. Roy and Dorothy Porter discuss how the body has been seen as an instrument of communication from the seventeenth century on (56). In fact, social life relied on feeling and its corresponding physical manifestation; emotions were known to produce disease symptoms, and nerves were the conduit between psyche and soma (Porter and Porter 64, 65, and 67). Mary Poovey

asserts that in the nineteenth century women were considered open books to be read by countenance and situation (24). The Austenian heroine understands that others read her feelings of love through a sophisticated analysis of her body's functioning. A heroine suffering in her body causes other characters to read her as emotionally troubled.

Sickness is intimately related to love in Austen's novels. Along with understanding that loss of love causes of illness, many characters identify healthy love through a reading of the body that is akin to a diagnosis. If love is to be diagnosed, the assumption that the body is to be read sickens, or medicalizes, the nineteenth-century understanding of love, making it the epidemic one hopes to catch, just as Austen's heroines are expected to "catch" their men.⁶ These characters know to tell the story of their loves and the story of their losses in the language of literary love, which makes their responses to love and to loss participatory in larger social conventions than their immediate surroundings warrant. Well-provisioned widows and other women who have no financial need of men read symptoms onto other men and women to keep the social text of love ongoing. Spinsters or other women who have a need of men but have no hope of catching them, learn to respond to the smallest of social encounters with men in the trappings of the love story, so that they can read their own lives as full of the emotions that they are supposed to exhibit. Women who have need of men and are the recipients of male affection revel in their participation in the literary and medicalized love tradition that allows them to enact their proper social roles. And women who need men, want men, and are the recipients of male love that is thwarted participate in literary, medicalized love conventions in the most self-aware manner.

In *Sense and Sensibility*, the story of the loss of first attachments, Jane Austen places the conventions surrounding literary lovesickness in direct contrast with the ideology that women only love once and forever. She presents characters who believe in the importance of first attachments, but whose own happiness depend upon their acceptance of a second attachment as their primary love relationship. In *Sense and Sensibility*, after Marianne and Elinor Dashwood have their romantic hopes destroyed, they must establish new social identities for those around them to read. Elinor must present herself as unhurt in a silent martyrdom, while Marianne has the liberty of presenting herself as greatly injured, perhaps irrecoverably. Injury garners sympathy, status and care in a luxurious mourning that is its own reward. Both Elinor and Marianne knowingly follow – and knowingly break – conventions surrounding the loss of love. Elinor, in complete control of her body and mind, reveals her broken heart to only two people, but Marianne, who seems completely out of control of her person, has control over the larger readership of her lovesick narrative.

Austen presents the attraction of lovesickness as the power of being able to control the telling of tales. Those who tell the tales of thwarted love are able to participate in one of the most pervasive social conventions of the early nineteenth century. In telling the lovesick tale, one is re-telling the same old tale over again and including oneself in *the* story of the early nineteenth century. The spectator or witness of the love story can tell tales about those she does or does not know, encouraging a social focus on burgeoning and unsuccessful love and a focus on all women as being in some relation to the love story. The power of the lovesick story is occasionally in the refusal to

tell it, the participant in thwarted love who remains silent can escape the publicity of her pain, and she can partially deny the pain of her experience with love by controlling all interpretation of her own life. Finally, the participant in thwarted love who tells her own story usurps the power ceded to male versions of lost love in the sentimental tradition,⁷ granting herself the unconventional power to voice desire, need, and importance in her social circle.

Aware that symptoms of illness can be a sign of love, Marianne initially uses a contrary reading of sickness to distance herself from a love story with a man whose attentions she does not desire. Mrs. Jennings, the Dashwood family's nosy benefactress, has read her into a tale of love with Col. Brandon, the neighborhood's most eligible bachelor.

Mrs. Jennings was a widow, with an ample jointure. She had only two daughters, both of whom she had lived to see respectably married, and she had now therefore nothing to do but to marry all the rest of the world. In the promotion of this object she was zealously active, as far as her ability reached; and missed no opportunity of projecting weddings among all the young people of her acquaintance. She was remarkably quick in the discovery of attachments. . . .(30)

Mrs. Jennings is a woman who, free from competition for men, seeks only to perpetuate the story of love, reading attachments all around her. She has long "enjoyed the advantage of raising the blushes and the vanity of many a young lady by insinuations of her power over . . . a young man" (30). Austen's narrator ties blushes, vanity, and power

together. As a young lady believes that she is powerful, she blushes in response to her feelings of increased importance. In *Telling Complexions: The Nineteenth-Century English Novel and the Blush*, Mary Ann O'Farrell writes that identifying the blush means seeing it as writing on and of the body; the blush is the product of somatic agency (3). Thus, when another character sees a young lady's pink cheeks and reads them as blushing, that character is reading the blush as the young lady's own bodily response to those around her. The narrator criticizes Mrs. Jennings's practice of "raising" blushes by introducing ideas of "power" to "many a young lady" that lead them to a negative state of "vanity." However, the narrator is not the only character reading blushes. Mrs. Jennings is reading the blushes that she has raised for her own storytelling.⁸

Unlike the other young ladies that Mrs. Jennings has prodded to vanity through her revelations of their power over men, Marianne is not flattered by the teasing. Mrs. Jennings is convinced that Col. Brandon is in love with Marianne because Marianne is pretty and Col. Brandon listened to Marianne twice when she sang after dinner. Thus, Mrs. Jennings teases Marianne about the eligible and established Col. Brandon. This teasing makes an unblushing Marianne uncomfortable. Marianne is angry that Mrs. Jennings creates out of whole cloth a reason to tease her in public. Indeed, Marianne at first does not even understand which man Mrs. Jennings could be teasing her about, but as soon as she does, "she hardly knew whether most to laugh at its absurdity, or censure its impertinence, for she considered it as an unfeeling reflection on the colonel's advanced years, and on his forlorn condition as an old bachelor" (31). That Marianne does not blush in response to Mrs. Jennings's teasing reveals to the reader that Marianne

is not vain, and Marianne's reading of Brandon's age and "forlorn condition as an old bachelor" allows her to remain oblivious to attentions she does not seek. However, Marianne cannot control how Mrs. Jennings will incorporate her into a story of love, producing stories and gossip for others.

While Marianne has no control over how society reads her body, she can attempt to control the story into which her immediate family reads her. Marianne rebuts Mrs. Jennings' reading of Col. Brandon's feelings once she is alone with her family. A young girl's protestations that she is not in love and could not possibly be attractive to a particular man can be read as a confused girl's misunderstanding of her own heart. Marianne would only lend credence to Mrs. Jennings' readings if she were to provide a modest denial to the very idea that Brandon fancies her, and she is too much of an experienced reader to follow this prescribed role for the heroine of a love story. Instead, Marianne astutely counters Mrs. Jennings' reading of her body with a romantic ideology that locates love with the young and that allows her to shift the focus from Col. Brandon's watching her beautiful body as she sings to Col. Brandon's physical condition. Marianne speaks Brandon into old age and sickness, and while sickness may be the sign of thwarted passion, Marianne reads Brandon's body into a particular kind of sickness that she defines for her family as antithetical to love. Marianne reads Col. Brandon right out of her story. In anger at Mrs. Jennings' raillery about Col. Brandon, Marianne complains to her mother and her sister, Elinor, of Brandon's age and rheumatism. She explains that Col. Brandon cannot expect a love match at his age and insists, "thirty-five has nothing to do with matrimony" (32). Because he is so much

older than she, Marianne insists that he is too old for a seventeen-year-old to love. She is engaging a social framework that places the young in conjunction with love. Therefore, seventeen cannot love thirty-five because thirty-five is no longer in the marriage plot.

Elinor posits that perhaps seventeen and thirty-five should not marry each other, but that that does not exclude Brandon from all matrimony. Marianne then imagines that a woman ten years her senior might be suitable:

“A woman of seven and twenty,” said Marianne, after pausing a moment, “can never hope to feel or inspire affection again, and if her home be uncomfortable, or her fortune small, I can suppose that she might bring herself to submit to the offices of a nurse, for the sake of the provision and security of a wife. In his marrying such a woman therefore there would be nothing unsuitable. It would be a compact of convenience, and the world would be satisfied. In my eyes it would be no marriage at all, but that would be nothing. To me it would seem only a commercial exchange, in which each wished to be benefited at the expense of the other.” (32)

Of course, the match that Marianne manufactures for Col. Brandon is not complimentary. Instead of youthful, romantic love entering Brandon’s life later than it has entered others’ lives, Marianne insists that no woman of any age could love him – young women because he is too old and mature women because they are too old. A twenty-seven-year-old woman has been pushed outside of the marriage plot along with

thirty-five-year-old men and is imagined no longer to have the capacity to love or the capacity to inspire affection.

Marianne understands that many different social pressures lead to matrimony. She lists several in these passages: desire for romantic love, desire to leave an uncomfortable home, desire to escape poverty, and need of a caretaker. Marianne is worldly-wise enough to know that not all marriages are based on love and even to understand that marriage not based on love can be satisfactory in some ways, but she insists upon separating marriage as “commercial exchange” from marriage as a union of lovers based upon her belief in certain romantic ideologies about love. Marianne’s romantic ideology insists that love is the domain of the young. Marriage at a mature age, she reasonably asserts, is not love, but a social arrangement of goods and services. Thus, not just any twenty-seven-year-old would marry Col. Brandon, but an old maid who is either poverty stricken or abused in her family home “might bring herself” to provide the services of a nurse to an aging man for the goods and monies he can provide. This separation of the young, romantic love from mature “commercial exchange” is partially what sets her up for such heartache with her dashing and handsome love interest, Willoughby. Because he is young, Marianne assumes that he will be driven by romantic instead of financial motivations. Unfortunately for her, Willoughby assumes the postures of youthful, passionate love, at the same time that he values the more mature commercial exchange of marriage.

Elinor rejects Marianne’s bleak assessment of romantic love after the age of twenty-six, even as she declares the futility of making Marianne change her mind, “It

would be impossible, I know,” replied Elinor, “to convince you that a woman of seven and twenty could feel for a man of thirty-five anything near enough to love, to make him a desirable companion to her” (32). Even though Elinor asserts a different opinion about the possibilities of love in those older than herself and Marianne, she only tries to change Marianne’s assumptions about Col. Brandon’s health. Elinor insists, “I must object to your dooming Colonel Brandon and his wife to the constant confinement of a sick chamber, merely because he chanced to complain yesterday (a very cold damp day) of a slight rheumatic feel in one of his shoulders” (32). Elinor acknowledges that some arthritic complaints are occasioned by weather and not by age, but Marianne contradicts this assertion with another contrasting assertion of ideology. Marianne complains that “he talked of flannel waistcoats” (32), implying that a man complaining of aches and pains could be signaling manly exertion, but the reliance on and speaking about flannel waistcoats can only be a sign of age.

Elinor undercuts Marianne’s social understanding of the male body with her next remark. Elinor jokingly responds, “Had he been only in a violent fever, you would not have despised him half so much. Confess, Marianne, is not there something interesting to you in the flushed cheek, hollow eye, and quick pulse of a fever?” (33). This humorous exchange is so because of the truth in the way that metaphors of illness are treated. Rheumatism is used as the illness of the aged and slow, when active military service or heroic injury could be reason enough for an arthritic shoulder. But Elinor picks up on an interesting characteristic of Marianne’s: illness is not just illness to her, but is also a physical sign of a different condition. To Marianne rheumatism is not

simply the ability to use one's shoulder but, when connected with talk of flannel waistcoats, "is invariably connected with aches, cramps, rheumatisms, and every species of ailment that can afflict the old and the feeble" (32-3). It is absurd to suppose that a lover is rheumatic, or for that matter that a man with rheumatism is a lover. As an illness of the "old and feeble," rheumatism locates a man outside of Marianne's plotting for true love and marriage, and conveniently out of her own story. A fever on the other hand, and a "violent fever" no less, is a perfectly appropriate illness for a prospective lover. Youth is violent; and the symptoms of fever imitate the literary conventions surrounding lovers -- flushed cheeks from blushing, hollow eyes from incessant daydreaming of the loved one, and a quickened pulse from the desired closeness of one's love. Thus, rheumatism writes a story of an old man, and one past the age for romantic attachment, while fever writes the story of youth and first attachments. Austen reveals in this family conversation a subtle key to her novels. In an Austen novel, lovesickness is more than the sign that love has ended—the right type of illness is the very sign of love. Her narrator, and occasionally some of her characters, catalogues the symptoms that prove the beginning and progress of love, just as they document the sickness that models the end of love.

Elinor uncovers the truth that Marianne reads illness according to her power to write or to erase a story with it, and she even laughingly corrects Marianne for telling unflattering tales about the good people around her just because she has the power to do so. Marianne is guilty of exactly the same impropriety as Mrs. Jennings—an impropriety that Austen is happily engaged in as the author of this text that centers on

the manifestations of emotional experience on the body, or the many sicknesses of love. As Mrs. Jennings controls how she and others read Marianne's beautiful body as Col. Brandon's object of desire, so does Marianne control how her family interprets Col. Brandon, writing on his body the illness that writes him out of her life. Both Mrs. Jennings and Marianne are resourceful enough to intertwine the discourses of love and sickness and further the tales they wish to tell; they make of female lovesickness a technology of the self. In her novels Austen depicts the nineteenth-century woman as understanding her social relations to be based upon her story, which she carefully constructs by selecting and weaving together social assumptions that form the narrative she wishes to embody.

As silly as the dialogue between the two sisters about Col. Brandon's age and likelihood to marry is, it sets up a framework to read Marianne's critique of Elinor and Edward Ferrar's love. To her mother, Marianne condemns Elinor's calm farewell from Norland and Edward, for even though Elinor sustained a double loss at the move, she "in quitting Norland and Edward, cried not as [Marianne] did" (33). Marianne lays out a series of expectations for Elinor's behavior that Elinor does not fulfill, and those expectations are what is to be expected of the woman thwarted in love: the woman who has loved and lost or the woman in love and in suspense. Austen is able to embed the symptoms of thwarted love in her text through Marianne's surveillance and judgment of Elinor. The reader understands tears to be a sign of love, and Elinor to be too calm to be an impassioned lover, by Marianne's competitive jab that Elinor "cried not as she did," even though Marianne cried only for their lost home and Elinor wept as she parted from

home and suitor. Later, Marianne is surprised and concerned not only that Edward has not yet paid them a visit, but that "[e]ven now her [Elinor's] self-command is invariable. When is she dejected or melancholy? When does she try to avoid society, or appear restless and dissatisfied in it?" (33). Marianne expects to see Elinor perform her sadness and anxiety before the family, but Elinor does not weep, exhibit signs of depression, shun others, act restless or unhappy. Marianne has a psychological, behavioral, and emotional checklist that love should follow, and she is disgusted at Elinor's not producing symptoms of lovesickness on her body. Elinor may laugh because Marianne would be more attracted to a man with a fever than one with a chill, but Marianne's understanding of how love should be exhibited on the body is no mere joke to her.

Austen wrote more than one female character who relies on a checklist of symptoms as the sign of thwarted love. In Austen's *Emma*, Emma Woodhouse not only reads others' bodies according to a socially prescribed idea of love, but she diagnoses her own feelings in correspondence to her psychological and physical symptoms. After misreading the sighings and blushings in Frank Churchill's leave-taking from Highbury as proof of his love for her, Emma knows that she will miss his presence in her social circle and wishes to determine the exact nature of her feelings towards him. Having lost this man for an indeterminate amount of time, she must attempt to diagnose love through her loss, and thus the language of lost love in Austen becomes the language of self-discovery and sometimes the language of newfound love. A self-proclaimed matchmaker, Emma attempts to be her own detached observer, reading the signs of her own heart and diagnosing how she feels about Churchill; "Emma felt so sorry to part,

and foresaw so great a loss to their little society from his absence as to begin to be afraid of being too sorry, and feeling it too much” (*Emma*, 235). Emma’s emotional response to Churchill’s departure is one of sadness, followed by fear. Emma is afraid that she feels the loss of Frank Churchill too much because she is determined not to marry. She tries to rationalize her sorrow as the “sad change” (*Emma*, 235) from new, lively company back to Hartfield’s “common course” (*Emma*, 235), but she is afraid of what might happen if she really is in love. The effect of love on the single woman is profound, and the marriage plot is powerful.

Emma is a remarkably social creature, and her dilemma seems to be in understanding whether the loss of Frank Churchill for a few weeks affects her more on a social or personal level. Her confusion about this point is amusing, since a great portion of it is derived from her understanding that male love, however strong or constant, initiates female love.

. . . To complete every other recommendation, he had *almost* told her that he loved her. What strength, or what constancy of affection he might be subject to was another point; but at present she could not doubt his having a decidedly warm admiration, a conscious preference of herself; and this persuasion, joined to all the rest, made her think that she *must* be a little in love with him, in spite of every previous determination against it. (*Emma*, 235-6)

Emma “*must* be a little in love” despite “previous determination against it” because she is persuaded of his admiration of her. Recognizing Churchill’s good taste, Emma can’t

help but feel persuaded to value the man who sees her as preferable to and of more value than the other ladies in Highbury. Believing that she “must” love, but fearing the power of love to change her life from the story she has already plotted for herself, Emma seeks to gauge her emotional response to Churchill’s leaving through a detached and deliberative process in which she ignores her emotions and catalogs her somatic and psychological responses to the loss of a potential suitor.

Austen writes a world in which it is difficult for a woman to form a proper sense of self outside of romantic ideology. Here, a lady has few attractive political or social roles that can aid in her character formation, aside from an ideology in which she is prized above all others for some innate quality, and this ideology requires the sophisticated presentation of femininity on her body. After hypothesizing that she must love Churchill in response to his love of her, Emma asserts that she has the symptoms that prove it; “I certainly must,” said she. “This sensation of listlessness, weariness, stupidity, this disinclination to sit down and employ myself, this feeling of every thing’s being dull and insipid about the house! – I must be in love; I should be the oddest creature in the world if I were not – for a few weeks at least” (*Emma*, 236). Emma declares herself to be in love so that she is not “the oddest creature in the world,” yet she quickly establishes a timetable for recovery. She must be in love “for a few weeks at least.” This love will leave no lasting blot on her happiness. Emma, Austen’s only heroine determined not to marry for the sake of caring for her invalid father, is playing here with ideas of being in love, suffering loss, and getting over it quickly. This is the attractiveness of literary lovesickness conventions. Emma wishes to be lovesick, as she

has no intention of really loving, marrying, and abandoning her father. A moderate heartache would be the best and most attractive participation in lovesickness to her because it does not truly jeopardize her health, and it keeps her from being the “oddest” creature in the world. Emma, concerned not with being an odd creature but an odd woman, wishes to be desirable even as she chooses to be single. As a matchmaker Emma enjoys the love stories she crafts all around her. Her obvious pleasure in incorporating others into the nineteenth-century marriage plot is a pleasure she intends to deny herself in her own life story. Her fear of being in love and her determined disconnection of her emotions from her self-analysis in these passages enable her to experience the nineteenth-century love story while remaining in complete control of her narrative at the same time. Thus, Emma can craft a unique love story in which the heroine is desired and desiring, yet who chooses not to become a loyal wife because she remains a dutiful daughter. Emma assumes that she causes the somatic signs that prove Frank Churchill loves, and she reads her feelings and body into a context of lovesickness as well. If he loves her, which she doesn’t doubt, and she returns his love and denies herself marriage, then she proves her noble self-sacrifice for the sake of her family.

The narrator reveals that “Emma continued to entertain no doubt of her being in love” (237), most probably because she was entertaining herself with ideas of being in love. After determining that she “must” love, a pretty sure sign that she does not, Emma has only to determine how much she loves. She begins to monitor her thoughts about Churchill in order to ascertain the degree of her affection:

At first, she thought it was a good deal; and afterwards, but little. She had great pleasure in hearing Frank Churchill talked of; and, for his sake, greater pleasure than ever in seeing Mr. and Mrs. Weston; she was very often thinking of him, and quite impatient for a letter, that she might know how he was, how were his spirits, how was his aunt, and what was the chance of his coming to Randalls again this spring. But, on the other hand, she could not admit herself to be unhappy, nor, after the first morning, to be less disposed for employment than usual; she was still busy and cheerful; and, pleasing as he was, she could yet imagine him to have faults. (237)

Emma wants to understand herself literarily, according to what a strong attachment “must produce” in terms of symptoms on her body. She wishes to follow a convention and to read her participation in a love story in her own medicalization. However, wishing to hear of and from him, Emma realizes that her schedule is not altered by her body’s inability to function nor is her mind so altered by love that she cannot see his flaws. After she sees that her mind and body are not disarranged by the departure of Frank Churchill, she is able to proceed to an understanding of how she actually feels about him:

thinking of him so much, and as she sat drawing or working, forming a thousand amusing schemes for the progress and close of their attachment, fancying interesting dialogues, and inventing elegant letters; the conclusion of every imaginary declaration on his side was that she

refused him. Their affection was always to subside into friendship. . .

When she became sensible of this, it struck her that she could not be very much in love; for in spite of her previous and fixed determination never to quit her father, never to marry, a strong attachment certainly must produce more of a struggle than she could foresee in her own feelings.

(237)

Emma finally acknowledges that “a strong attachment must produce more of a struggle.”

An attachment would have to produce feelings, and Emma ultimately accepts that she is not in danger of being the heartbroken heroine of a story about a suitor denied by means of “interesting dialogues” or “elegant letters.” Emma realizes in these passages that she does not have to fear her emotional response to Churchill’s leaving. Indeed, the idea that a girl doesn’t know her own feelings until she has been diagnosed by someone familiar with a social understanding of the female body’s manifestation of thwarted love as sickness is amusing, but it underscores the power of those who tell the tales of love. That love can be confused for friendship reveals that those who wish to tell love stories may convince others, or even themselves, that they love, even when they do not, if they simply exhibit the symptoms of thwarted love.

Austen reveals in *Emma* that a young lady teaches herself about love by her ability to analyze her body and her emotions in relation to conventional literary symptoms of love. What Austen reveals in *Sense and Sensibility* through a complicated rendering of two sisters falling in love and encountering rejection at the same time and yet reacting in emotionally, physically, behaviorally and socially different ways is the

complicated social framework of nineteenth-century love, sickness, and social expectation for young ladies. Several competing ideologies existed to define and explain women's natural behavior, the way women fell in love, and the way women reacted to lost love, but Austen embeds in her novels an understanding that these social codes can be attractive, they can be deadly, or they can be manipulated to orient a woman into a central place of power in her own story. Austen uses lovesickness in several ways: as true medical condition, to argue, to define character, and to propel plot. Marianne and Elinor Dashwood have completely different responses to loss of love because they judge their behavior in different social contexts. Marianne exhibits symptoms of socially understood lovesickness for the sake of the social recognition she gets from those around her, while Elinor attempts to conceal her heartache and Marianne's from a public gaze, masking their emotional pain in alternating exhibitions of health and of ill health. Each sister works hard to make sure that her actions match her idea of propriety: one believing that it is proper to reveal all she feels and the other that it is proper to conceal all.

Austen reveals in *Sense and Sensibility* that while social behaviors are dependent on a set of values that society agrees upon, competing social values create a multiplicity of socially "correct" behaviors. Lovesickness is not a direct correlation between psyche and soma. Austen's heroines do not become physically ill when their minds are disordered or their hearts (figuratively) break. Austen presents women who are knowingly following social codes in their performances of love and health. She allows these women to be presented as partially morally superior, partially morally suspect, and she never entirely resolves the tension between the desire to follow a code and the

dangers of that code. Austen uses lovesickness as a technology of the self to show the depth of woman's desires – not only for men, but also for power to speak, power to hide, power to act, power to break social norms. She clearly encapsulates the central problem of lovesickness: the only socially approved breaking of norms comes with the chastening force of ill health as identity. The lovesick woman has the social importance of the invalid and will garner support and care from those around her, but she must produce illness on her body to achieve that identity based on limited power.

Women may have their feelings hurt without exhibiting signs of physical distress. Thus, when one of Austen's female characters openly performs her lovesickness, she is choosing to do so. She is participating in a set of literary and social beliefs about women that call for women to produce the signs of emotional and mental trauma on their bodies to be read by those around them. What Austen shows in *Sense and Sensibility* that is unique is a sympathetic lovesick woman alongside a sympathetic heartbroken woman who does not exhibit her physical symptoms. Marianne knows and reproduces the symptoms of lovesickness for others to see while Elinor knows the symptoms of lovesickness and must deliberately mask each one from those around her. Because both Marianne, who performs lovesickness, and Elinor, who deliberately thwarts being read as lovesick, are sympathetic, Austen presents participation in the lovesickness tradition of jilted women as a nineteenth-century necessity, but the production of the symptoms of lovesickness on the body as a choice. One participates in the lovesickness tradition by understanding that in the moments surrounding love and loss of love, one is being read by others who are looking for certain literary signs of

love: blushing, paleness, fever, restlessness, weariness, weeping, depression, and so on. Wishing to avoid a romantic identification with Col. Brandon, Marianne must participate in the traditions of love and sickness in order to recode her suitor as an ailing thirty-five-year-old man who is too old for love, just as Elinor will publicly refute the idea that any of her physical ailments are related to love in order to recode the story of her relationship with Edward Ferrars as merely friendship. Thus, even the woman who wishes to deny love must do so aware of the nineteenth-century's social understanding of female love's relationship to sickness. Austen brings to light the fact that women who conceal behaviors that would link symptoms of ill health with love and women who exhibit symptoms of lost love on their bodies for display to others are making a choice to do so. By divorcing the direct correlation between women's heartache and women's health, Austen grants women the right to choose what social self they present to others. The lovesickness in Austen's novels is not written as disease; it is social code.

When Mrs. Dashwood, Elinor, and Margaret return from a visit to find not that Marianne is jilted, but that Willoughby is merely leaving on a trip to London for an indeterminate time, they see that "Marianne came hastily out of the parlour apparently in violent affliction, with her handkerchief at her eyes; and without noticing them ran up stairs" (64). Mrs. Dashwood instantly categorizes Marianne's distress as a series of symptoms by asking, "Is she ill?" (64). Something about Marianne in this moment is best rendered in terms of disease. The narrator faithfully catalogues her onset of lovesick symptoms. A temporary thwarting of her love story produces a story of invalidism.

They saw nothing of Marianne till dinner time, when she entered the room and took her place at the table without saying a word. Her eyes were red and swollen; and it seemed as if her tears were even then restrained with difficulty. She avoided the looks of them all, could neither eat nor speak, and after some time, on her mother's silently pressing her hand with tender compassion, she burst into tears and left the room. (71)

Marianne's condition is pitiable, yet it is also formulaic. Just as Austen is aware of a need to capitulate to readers' desire and provide a believable nineteenth-century lovesick heroine, so does Marianne seem to know that her best means of communicating her distress at unexpected distance between herself and her lover is through participation in the tradition of lovesickness. Marianne seeks solitude, cries with or without provocation, cannot eat, and cannot speak to the others with composure. Marianne expresses her dissatisfaction at Willoughby's departure and elicits her mother's sympathetic, silent touch with a meaningful display of symptoms that in this passage seem entirely natural. Austen appears to be presenting us with a text based upon the underlying assumption that a woman will develop a nervous disorder if her immediate desires are not met.

However, in the next passage Austen reminds us that this behavior is not natural, but is the chosen behavior of a girl who has accepted the checklist of behaviors for thwarted love that she earlier disparages Elinor for not performing. The girl who performs lovesickness is enabled to express her emotional distress, but she is severely limited in the manner in which she may do so. Marianne is writing the story of her

disappointment upon her body. As Kaplan and Kaplan note about *Sense and Sensibility*, “physical and emotional complaints are linked to the theme of suffering and recovery” (119). Marianne is experiencing what she believes to be a temporary separation from her lover, and her presentation of mild symptoms of ill health set the scene for what she believes will be a miraculous recovery upon Willoughby’s return. Austen makes clear that Marianne knowingly exhibits certain symptoms so that her family understands the level of attachment she has to Willoughby:

She would have been ashamed to look her family in the face the next morning, had she not risen from her bed in more need of repose than when she lay down in it. But the feelings which made such composure a disgrace, left her in no danger of incurring it. She was awake the whole night, and she wept the greatest part of it. She got up with an headache, was unable to talk, and unwilling to take any nourishment; giving pain every moment to her mother and sisters, and forbidding all attempt at consolation from either. Her sensibility was potent enough! (71)

Marianne experiences lovesickness as a social code that she feels compelled to follow. If she did not follow it, she would be “ashamed” and in “disgrace.” Austen’s somewhat mocking account of Marianne’s emotional turmoil at Willoughby’s departure to London fulfills many purposes. By presenting this description of Marianne’s emotion, Austen acknowledges audience expectation by invoking the literary convention of female lovesickness; mocks the convention that insists on a checklist of prescribed emotional, somatic, and behavioral responses in order to validate a heroine; writes a heroine who is

conscious of a need to feel shame upon failure to fill a prescribed role; augments Marianne's character by suggesting that Marianne is blessed with the misery that will enable her to act the part that will save her from "disgrace"; and uses the list as a tool of lovesick measurement to define Marianne's feelings as "potent enough." Austen achieves much in five sentences. She produces a passage that speaks to the literary, cultural, gendered, medical, and educational discourses of the nineteenth century through a literary convention that she presents as social code.

Austen softens the satire of this passage by explaining that Marianne feels the emotions that would have caused the sleeplessness naturally, but much of Marianne's behavior in this passage is a matter of choice. Anita Gorman writes that Austen "uses illness for a variety of purposes: to manipulate plot, to enhance characterization, and to show how people not only live with problems but actually create illnesses, both imaginary and real, as coping devices, and as mechanisms designed (however unconsciously) to privilege themselves and to control the lives of others" (xi). Just as Marianne could combat the creation of stories about her and Col. Brandon in her own family circle with a sophisticated reading of love and men's health, so to does she control the creation of stories about her and Willoughby. Her illness here is a bit of a tall tale, relating more of a relationship between her and Willoughby than is later shown to be strictly true. Her mild illness even garners her extra power in her home, where no one can question her about her relationship for fear of causing pain, and she can control the behavior of her mother and sisters by her refusal of their offers of comfort. Of course, weakening herself to gain power grants Marianne a very limited power. She cannot act

to end her separation from Willoughby; she can only perform behaviors that explain how she feels to those around her, even as it misleads them about the exact nature of her relationship with Willoughby.

Austen shows Marianne gaining social power in her family through her tendency to sicken, causing them to feel sorry for her. A sympathetic Mrs. Dashwood is so distraught at Willoughby's departure that she isolates herself in her room to indulge her own grief; even Elinor feels the "tenderest compassion" for the "violent sorrow which Marianne was in all probability not merely giving way to as a relief, but feeding and encouraging as a duty" (66). Miriam Bailin purports that a "patient asserts the fact of self through her physical debility, asserts her claim to attention and recognition, and to a degree of command – without incurring the guilt or risking the dangers inherent in self-promotion" (25). Marianne can focus familial attention on herself. She can demand care. Later, when Marianne knows all hope of marriage to Willoughby is gone, Elinor asks her to subdue her emotions for her sake and their mother's, but Marianne refuses, asking, "to appear happy when I am so miserable—Oh! Who can require it!" (164). Marianne gains power by labeling as cruelty her mother's and sister's desire for her to be calm. A girl who is ill can escape familial obligations and chores. She can indulge in the luxury of ill temper, which is potentially never justified in conduct-book literature.⁹ She can hide her feelings behind the very physical symptoms that were supposedly revealing her emotional pain. However, Austen's lovesick heroine is not immune from the satirical evaluation of the narrator, who speaks of Marianne as having a profound lack of power

in the same passage that Marianne's powerful influence over her family is revealed. The narrator informs us that Marianne

was without any power, because she was without any desire of command over herself. The slightest mention of any thing relative to Willoughby overpowered her in an instant; and though her family were most anxiously attentive to her comfort, it was impossible for them, if they spoke at all, to keep clear of every subject which her feelings connected with him. (71)

Marianne's family is actively censored in their conversation by the presented misery of one of its members. Austen's narrator is concerned with undisciplined displays of emotion that affect the lives of others.¹⁰ Austen uses terminology of the lovesick girl's loss of power and loss of health, but while Marianne is without any desire to command herself, her family is "most anxiously attentive to her comfort." Austen sets up a paradigm of lovesickness that holds the hurt or jilted party responsible for power she gains over her immediate environment. Any capitulation to self-pity and loss of self-control at the expense of the comfort and care of others is a violation of a family trust. Laurie Kaplan and Richard Kaplan note that "invalids test the sense and sensibilities of the other characters by dividing loyalties or by demanding attentions at the most inopportune moments" (119). Marianne is abusing her family. Austen wishes to establish abusive power as a non-viable form of power. In the process of establishing repressive self-control as the seat of power, though, she cannot help but underline the influence of the girl performing lovesickness over those around her. Here, Austen

embeds a stigma to the performance of lovesickness, tying it to its abusive power over others, naming it being “without any power” and calling Marianne “overpowered,” but she is incapable of making the performance of lovesickness entirely unattractive.

Marianne achieves total privacy and gains the power to keep silent with her family about her relationship to Willoughby because her family assumes an engagement exists. When Elinor wonders if they are engaged, Mrs. Dashwood asserts,

I have not wanted syllables where actions have spoken so plainly. Has not his behaviour to Marianne and to all of us, for at least the last fortnight, declared that he loved and considered her as his future wife, and that he felt for us the attachment of the nearest relation? Have we not perfectly understood each other? Has not my consent been daily asked by his looks, his manner, his attentive and affectionate respect? My Elinor, is it possible to doubt their engagement? (68-9)

Elinor’s remaining doubts, she acknowledges, would disappear if she knew that “they correspond” (69). Unmonitored correspondence between a man and a woman would establish a high degree of intimacy; the letters must be love letters. Marianne’s behavioral and emotional response to his departure and her later letter writing to him in London all lead her family to believe her both engaged and in a position in which her trust with this all-important male relationship must not be violated. They cannot force an explanation of her behavior at Willoughby’s leaving for fear of contributing to her symptoms and causing pain, but they are also constrained by what they believe is her tie and vow of secrecy with the man who will be the most important relation in her life.

Mrs. Dashwood refuses to ask Marianne if an engagement exists. She tells Elinor that “I should never deserve her confidence again, after forcing from her a confession of what is meant at present to be unacknowledged by anyone. . . . I would not attempt to force the confidence of anyone; of a child much less; because a sense of duty would prevent the denial which her wishes might direct” (73). To force Marianne’s confidence could cause her to break a vow with her future husband. Where a father may have been able to demand answers and to counsel her, the Dashwood women feel an already-deteriorating tie to Marianne that becomes only more tenuous the more she presents an attachment to Willoughby.

Young, romantic, and impressionable girls are not the only women who prize the emotional over the physical and financial components of life. Mrs. Dashwood, Marianne and Elinor’s primary female role model, is a firm believer in the cult of romantic love. She provides an inspiring image to her daughters. Many conduct books at the time suggested that women's hearts were capable of one love, and that attachment should be prevented with young men until an engagement established a literal “attachment” that sanctioned an emotional one.¹¹ Mrs. Dashwood is not concerned with her daughters’ overly hasty emotional attachment to the men of their choice. That Marianne will become attached to Willoughby she recognizes as a consequence of their proximity, just as she sees proximity as the key to Elinor and Edward forming a relationship; however, she has little or no concern that her daughters should temper their emotions until a proposal is made or that her daughters' choices could initially be attracted to and then abandon them. Indeed, Mrs. Dashwood so enjoys the romance

playing out around her that she is not concerned that Marianne and Willoughby are a source of communal joking, and she "entered into all their feelings with a warmth which left her no inclination for checking this excessive display of them" (40). Mrs. Dashwood utters no cautioning word to Marianne, and eventually, the daughter who did not believe in second attachments has fully formed her first; "her heart was devoted to Willoughby" (40). Marianne forms an attachment that is a prime contributor to her identity.

Mrs. Dashwood is an important influence on her daughters and teaches them to privilege emotion in their lives through her displays of grief over her husband's death. She encourages the grief of her daughters, and "[t]he agony of grief which overpowered them [Mrs. Dashwood and Marianne] at first, was voluntarily renewed, was sought for, was created again and again. They gave themselves up wholly to their sorrow, seeking increase of wretchedness in every reflection that could afford it, and resolved against ever admitting consolation in future" (5). Mrs. Dashwood, in losing her husband, loses her status and precedence, her property, her home, most of her servants, her carriage, her horses, everything but her most personal possessions and the money settled on her in annuity at her wedding. While Mrs. Dashwood feels "immoveable disgust" (4) towards Fanny, the daughter-in-law who moves into Norland and assumes her precedence on the day of Mr. Dashwood's funeral, she remains as a visitor in her home to avoid a breach between her daughters and their brother (4). She desires to remain at Norland "where every thing reminded her of former delight" (6), but eventually "the sight of every well known spot ceased to raise the violent emotion which it produced for a while" (11). Mrs. Dashwood ceases to grieve even with concerted effort to make herself miserable; "when

her spirits began to revive, and her mind became capable of some other exertion than that of heightening its affliction by melancholy remembrances, she was impatient to be gone, and indefatigable in her inquiries for a suitable dwelling” (11). The text makes clear that Mrs. Dashwood’s ever-growing contempt for Fanny would not have allowed her to live at Norland as long as she had (11), except for what she sees to be a “growing attachment” (12) between Elinor and Edward Ferrars, Fanny’s brother who visits during their six-month stay at Norland after their father’s death.

Along with modeling a priority of emotions and romantic love in life, even remaining in the home of a woman she holds in contempt for the sake of Elinor’s attachment to a young man, Mrs. Dashwood openly instructs her daughters to have little caution in matters of the heart. When Elinor speaks complementarily of Edward’s fundamental difference in character from his sister and submits that Mrs. Dashwood might like him upon further acquaintance, her mother, sensing an attachment, replies that she can “feel no sentiment of approbation inferior to love” (13). With a natural enjoyment of a shared sensibility with Marianne, she tries to instruct Elinor that there is no caution with attachment and love, for she has “never yet known what it was to separate esteem and love” (13). Indeed, Mrs. Dashwood gets to know Edward and finds him “no longer uninteresting when she knew his heart to be warm and his temper affectionate” (13). She finds him “no longer uninteresting” when she sees that he has the qualities of youth in his warm heart and of a lover in his affectionate temper. She writes a love story around Edward and Elinor speedily. The narrator notes, “No sooner did she perceive any symptom of love in his behaviour to Elinor, than she considered their

serious attachment as certain, and looked forward to their marriage as rapidly approaching" (13). Mrs. Dashwood medicalizes "his regard for Elinor" (13) that she perceives as the "symptom of love" and constructs a romantic marriage plot out of it.

Through their discussions of Elinor's attachment to Edward, Marianne is also instructed by her mother to prioritize sentimentality. Marianne is distressed at Edward's sedate affect in relation to Elinor's drawings and to poetry. The narrator has already assured us of Elinor and Marianne's equality of sentiment, yet Marianne reads their temperaments as vastly different and distances herself from her sister; "Elinor has not my feelings, and therefore she may overlook it, and be happy with him. But it would have broke *my* heart had I loved him, to hear him read with so little sensibility" (15). Indeed, Marianne continues her critique of Edward as a poor lover by proclaiming her fear that she will never fall in love because a lover, she acknowledges, would have to be too perfect to win her affections in the first place. She requires "all Edward's virtues, and his person and manners must ornament his goodness with every possible charm" (15). Mrs. Dashwood takes this moment not to correct her daughter's over-sentimentalization of romantic and marital bliss, but to perpetuate Marianne's mistake with the reply, "Why should you be less fortunate than your mother?" (15), indicating that all those manifold charms were found in the late Mr. Dashwood. Mrs. Dashwood has, projects, and supports the ill-founded hopes of her daughters. Elinor and Marianne, who have similar strength of attachment, distance themselves from each other. Marianne generally follows her mother's advice, while Elinor does not accept her mother's or Marianne's views on romantic love.

Austen illustrates how romantic love becomes a shrine, at which a lady can serve, believing she has found agency and identity through her lover. Marianne misunderstands the powers of sensibility; she believes that feelings are always represented by corresponding actions, and this belief causes her much heartache. Marianne is unable to understand Elinor's calm demeanor upon leaving Norland and upon not hearing from Edward. This passivity is not something that she accepts as a role of women with strong sensibilities. Elinor suggests "the propriety of some self-command to Marianne. But Marianne abhorred all concealment where no real disgrace could attend unreserved; and to aim at the restraint of sentiments which were not in themselves illaudable, appeared to her not merely an unnecessary effort, but a disgraceful subjection of reason to common-place and mistaken notions" (45). Marianne seems so carefree because of the nearly constant public displays of her emotions that she is too naïve to hide from others. Deborah Kaplan writes that "[i]n a world in which women are chosen by men, sensibility provides Marianne with fantasies of agency" (543). She writes letters to Willoughby and approaches him in London at a party because she believes that she must acknowledge publicly her having fallen in love with him so that everyone understands it (including Willoughby), and that understanding her love, Willoughby must return it. When Willoughby walks away from them at the party, Marianne begins to perform lovesickness and demands action from Elinor on her behalf. She believes that her performance of anxiety about her relationship with Willoughby will necessitate corresponding action on his part; "Go to him, Elinor," she cried, as soon as she could speak, "and force him to come to me. Tell him I must see him again—must speak to him

instantly” (153). She uses the words “force” and “must” repeatedly to describe what she sees as the power of her illness to get Willoughby to perform the role of the suitor as she wishes him to. Marianne learns that sensibility has provided her with only limited agency. She can acknowledge her attachment to Willoughby, she can write to him, she can speak first to him at a party, but the action she really desires (i.e. open acknowledgment of their love and proposing) must be performed by the man.

The attraction of the cult of sensibility is partially found in women’s desires for agency. The Dashwood women learn upon the death of Mr. Dashwood that male protection fails, leaving a need for female agency. Phoebe A. Smith explains that “English marriage and property law assumes the operation of benevolent paternalism, the presence of responsible and well-intentioned males who will care for the females of the species, who therefore do not need guaranteed legal rights” (3). Smith is right to point to Fanny Dashwood’s famous greed as proof of the failure of patriarchal inheritance to protect women.¹² Austen illuminates in her text the dilemma of single women in a society competing for rank, money, power, social standing, and men. Fanny Dashwood has married a wealthy man, and yet she still feels the need to protect their inheritance from her sisters-in-law. She also refuses to share her social standing with Elinor and Marianne, a social standing they both deserve and would benefit from, by inviting the lower-ranking Misses Steele to her home for a visit instead of them (221). Elinor and Marianne’s inability to act for themselves and their profound lack of protection are even more poignantly expressed through their goodness and lack of social wrangling. Of course, Austen reestablishes the value of the current inheritance system

by showing both of her heroines profiting by marriage to good men because of their recognized virtue.¹³ These marriages establish the idea that virtue will out and be rewarded in the current political system, but only by a woman gaining the attention of a virtuous, single man. Lucy Steele's successful match makes manifest the fact that virtuous women may win virtuous men, but that conniving women can win wealthier ones. This failure of benevolent paternalism shows why a girl would depend more on romantic love than on her family in the formation of her sense of self because the family she grew up in was not a stable political or economic social identity. Losing one's lover means losing one's value, another social register that can be enacted and partially rectified through a participation in lovesickness that provides status and demands care.

Once Marianne has been publicly jilted by Willoughby at the party, home remedies are applied to Marianne's case of heartache, but no doctor is needed, revealing the nature of her complaint to be moderate; she is not in physical jeopardy. Marianne keeps to herself and has to be "brought by degrees . . . into the habit of going out every day" (217). Marianne is rejecting the behaviors of a healthy woman and even considers a compliment of Miss Steele's that she "looked vastly smart, and she dared to say would make a great many conquests" to be "the greatest impertinence" (217). So why does a poor, healthy young woman on what must be one of very few trips to London decide to accept the role of the invalid instead of the role of a young, flirtatious girl ready to be won by any unattached and acceptable man? Marianne is a young woman whose father has died, whose half-brother is indifferent, and whose lover has betrayed her faith in him for a Miss Grey and her fifty thousand pounds. Raised in her father's station in life, she

is lowered upon his death to a cottage and a cousin's charity by her half-brother's half-hearted desire to provide for her side of the family. By means of her father's death, her brother's indifference, and her lover's desertion of her for Miss Grey and her fifty thousand pounds, patriarchal inheritance has thrice failed Marianne. Still, Marianne embraces sensibility and romantic love. The attraction of having one great all-encompassing love is powerful, and a notion for which Austen shows women to be willing to compromise their identity. Robert Polhemus notes that the novel has proselytized for the faith that "people complete themselves and fulfill their destinies only with another; that there is no religious marriage without love; and that in the quest for lasting love and the experience of being in love, men and women find their real worth and character" (27). Austen uses the primary love relationship as the main contributor to identity of the women in her novels. Polhemus asserts that *Pride and Prejudice* shows the passion of modern individualism: the need to be noticed and loved for your own distinctive self (45). It is no less attractive for Marianne Dashwood than for Elizabeth Bennet to be singled out by one suitor and desired above all the rest. Unfortunately for Marianne, she has found that not all young people embrace the idea that romantic love is paramount in choosing a spouse. To be desired but not to be wed by the young, impetuous Willoughby, whom she believed to be a fellow student of romantic literatures and believer in romantic ideologies, is incomprehensible and frightening to her. In society, a Marianne without patriarchal inheritance must lose not to Miss Greys but to their fifty thousand pounds.

The process of falling in love in an Austen novel already involves a medicalization of the female body and reading of love as symptoms; the process of being jilted involves a complicated and dangerous reconstruction of female identity. Earlier, Marianne turns down a horse Willoughby offers her because of the expense of keeping it, but Willoughby does not allow her to relinquish ownership. He says, “Marianne, the horse is still yours, though you cannot use it now. I shall keep it only till you can claim it. When you leave Barton to form your own establishment in a more lasting home, Queen Mab shall receive you” (50). Elinor recognizes in this “intimacy so decided” (50) and “perfect agreement” (50) the signs of their engagement. Believing herself to be one with Willoughby in all but name, Marianne has already divorced herself from dependence on her family for a sense of self, but upon being jilted she must rely upon Elinor, Mrs. Jennings, her brother, sister-in-law, and the Palmers to re-establish her former sense of self as a sister and a dependent. She embraces the limited power of invalidism; it establishes her as important among people whom she has not treated as valuable up to this point.

Marianne’s loss to capital causes her to undergo a severe identity crisis. Bailin writes that the “sickroom registers powerful desire for coherence at a time when economic, political, and social relations were undergoing profound reorganization and differentiation” (13). The sickroom provided a stable identity that any lady could grasp; a sick lady performs her vulnerability and her femininity. A lovesick lady proves that she is a lady of refined sensibilities. This is an identity that is not dependent upon the health of fathers, the whims of half-brothers, or even the financial needs of a lover. Marianne

distances herself from a cold world too focused on capital to see her intrinsic worth. The sickroom provides more than an achievable identity; it provides a space in which a woman can be properly disappointed, allowing a space in which she can properly desire. Where a woman can be conceived to have no need or desire for more than occasional notice and well-wishing from indifferent half brothers or, as Fanny Dashwood insists, even of a real brother (7), a woman is not seen as having socially-approved needs or desires. This was a view also distributed in popular conduct books; John Gregory advised his daughters never to desire for fear that they would lose their “charm” and “reduce the angel to a very ordinary girl” (43). The invalid, however, was sanctioned by medical discourse to have a need for cure and a need for attention. Accepting oneself as sick is accepting oneself as deserving of care. When a lady is sick, she can recognize herself as a needing and a desiring being—she needs care and desires to be well. Austen cannot allow her heroine to be coarse and low, so she must be lovesick. The reader must know that Marianne desires Willoughby to understand her disappointment, but a proper lady cannot divorce acceptable desire from illness. Thus, even though Marianne does not require a doctor in London, by asserting a need of care, she can have limited control of her environment and the power to properly express her disappointed desire.

The sicknesses of love that Austen is embedding in her novels are, of course, written, and not illnesses at all, even though the physicality of her literary lovesicknesses are important to her novels’ understanding of love and female identity. Austen used lovesickness as a social code that women manipulate to their own benefit, but also as the carrier of literary ideologies such as sensibility and romantic love that are so attractive

that women would willingly sacrifice themselves to their perpetuation. Susan Sontag in *Illness as Metaphor* asserts that illness is, in fact, not a metaphor. But that being the case, interesting things happen to one's identity when one's illness becomes a trope for one's self (Sontag 28). Austen's use of lovesickness as a social code allows her to reveal a literary ideology: that women may choose a symptomatic identity in lieu of an identity based upon romantic attachment, or more accurately, women may choose a symptomatic identity as the fulfillment of their romantic attachment. A woman can establish herself as the interest of a love story even when there is no man wooing her. Sontag also notes that when diseases and illnesses become things to decipher, diseases that are mysterious have the greatest power to be metaphors of the socially or morally wrong (Sontag 61). Indeed, since proper desire must be a desire that is read as illness, a lady complaining of the symptoms of lovesickness is continuing to define herself based upon romantic attachment and is hoping that others will read her that way as well. With the lovesick symptomatic identity, a woman gains sympathy, power, and the status of being written into the nineteenth-century story of love.

After Marianne's disappointing loss of Willoughby, John Dashwood sees her at a party in Harley Street, reads her body, and assesses her value as a single girl. However, he reads her as if she were a cipher (of no value herself, but capable of adding value to a man); to him her value is inevitably tied to the income of her future spouse. When he asks Elinor, "Is she ill?" (198), he is making a query about physical, not emotional, psychological, or spiritual health. Indeed, their brother is concerned that Marianne's value in the marriage market will be materially affected by her exposure to disease: "At

her time of life, any thing of an illness destroys the bloom forever!" (198). He continues the conversation to declare that she will probably not marry a man worth more than 500 or 600 a year.¹⁴ His assumption is that Marianne's beauty and bloom is the currency with which she will buy a spouse and gain a home and income of her own. As Johnson notes, "Dashwood, of course, is circling the only issue he cares about: if a woman can not serve herself and her family as an object of exchange in marriage, who knows but that she may turn to her brother—or half brother—for subsistence" (165). What John does not know is that Marianne has already fixed the affections of a man worth having, but she is acting out his loss and her value.

In a beautifully ironic aside to Col. Brandon at the Dashwood's dinner party, John Dashwood repeats this information, attempting to make Elinor look the more attractive of the two sisters. On this occasion Mrs. Ferrars snubs Elinor in favor of Lucy Steele. The narrator reveals Elinor's amusement with the situation (203), but we see evidence of Marianne's distress. Audrey Jaffe defines sympathy as a moment when an at-ease spectator sees a suffering object. She writes that in that moment "[s]ociety becomes a field of visual cues and its members alternative selves: imaginary possibilities in a field of circulating social images, confounded and interdependent projections of identity" (3). Marianne is upset for her sister because, as Jaffe defines it, Marianne sees herself in Elinor's place (6). She sees an impediment to a love-match that "her own wounded heart taught her to think of with horror" (206), and she bursts into tears and gets the attention of the room focused on her and off of Lucy and Elinor. While this action seems kind, Marianne's performance of lovesick sympathy pains actually

produces “more hurt” (206) for Elinor by calling public attention to emotions Elinor desires to conceal in public. What Austen does by presenting Marianne and Elinor’s competing experiences with lost love side by side with the conniving Lucy Steele’s sham heartache is provide an underlying argument for why each woman has a unique experience with love and lovesickness. Thus, when Marianne and Lucy exhibit symptoms of lovesickness at the same time that Elinor conceals symptoms of lovesickness, Austen is exploring what Roland Barthes acknowledges is the lover’s decision to what degree she hides her turbulence of passion (41). Austen writes a version of lovesickness in which love is not always presented on the woman’s body, and when love is made evident on the woman’s body, it is always in a context of women understanding that they are supposed to present specific symptoms for a particular audience as other women have before them. Austen expands the tradition of woman’s literary lovesickness as she renders conventional ideas that lost love equals somatic suffering and death in woman obsolete and problematizes the social assumption that one can read a woman’s emotions on her body with any degree of accuracy.

John Dashwood reads onto Marianne’s lovesick body an excuse for her impropriety. Marianne “has not such good health as her sister, --she is very nervous, --she has not Elinor’s constitution; --and one must allow that there is something very trying to a young woman who *has been* a beauty, in the loss of her personal attractions” (207). Thus, Marianne is read by her brother to Col. Brandon, a man he thinks is an outsider, as a girl whose emotional instability is the consequence of physical sickness, not vice versa. A hint of madness in the family could be damaging to Elinor’s value in

the marriage market (and his own sons' value in the future), so instead of labeling Marianne as hysterical or emotionally unstable he focuses on her poor physical health, contrasting it to Elinor's good physical health. He is reading illness as the loss of value and believes that he is promoting Elinor's value and ability to attract a man by comparing her health to Marianne's sickness. However, Marianne is knowingly adhering to a proposition that is similar, though inverted: not that illness equates to loss of value, but that the loss of value in her lover's eye equates to illness. The beautiful and complicated irony of this passage is caused by the reader's knowledge that Col. Brandon is interested in Marianne. His interest ensures that Marianne's physical illness will liken her to the also-sensitive Eliza whom he loved. Thus, Marianne's sickness, which advertises both her attachment to another man and her loss of value in that man's eyes, makes public a sensitivity of spirit that increases her value to Col. Brandon. Lovesickness may be attractive to a woman for the sympathy and status it provides, but a lovesick woman is also attractive to other men.

Marianne clings to the identity of a woman who is not well, without being more than slightly ill from psychosomatic symptoms. The intensity of Marianne's encounter with Willoughby at the London party, where he acts as though she were but the slightest acquaintance, is heightened by her lack of composure; "Her face crimsoned over, and she exclaimed in a voice of the greatest emotion, 'Good God! Willoughby, what is the meaning of this?'" (152). Whether or not Marianne would have been able to stop herself from blushing, she certainly chooses to confront Willoughby in public with this question in "a voice of the greatest emotion" that reveals both intimacy and ill use. She uses the

body language of love and of sickness to reveal her emotional connection to Willoughby. Marianne's straightforward and honest ejaculation clarifies that she is not jealous of Miss Grey, but that she simply does not understand the treatment she is receiving from her paramour. Marianne asserts the claim of her affections. Just as Emma feels that she must respond a little to Frank Churchill's love of her, so does Marianne assume that Willoughby, who has so publicly courted her in Barton that they are "most exceedingly laughed at" (46) for the "excessive display" (46) of their feelings for each other, will have to acknowledge his love for her as she reveals hers in public. Willoughby's dilemma is that the occupants of the ball may believe that female love is a responsive love, so that Marianne's expression of love might be read by others, including Miss Grey, as proof that Willoughby has been wooing and winning where he hasn't intended to marry. Marianne may be stigmatized by her forward love of a man who has not proposed, but she brands Willoughby as a cad first. Shortly after her rejection by Willoughby, Marianne goes from hot to cold, and "looking dreadfully white, and unable to stand, sunk into her chair, and Elinor, expecting every moment to see her faint, tried to screen her from the observation of others, while reviving her with lavender water" (153). With the loss of love comes the loss of bloom, or flush. Marianne needs support from a chair and is in danger of fainting, and she expresses her devastation in such an open manner that Elinor feels a need to hide her as much as possible. Bodily weakness and illness may sanction desire for health and desire for care, but illnesses surrounding love also expose thwarted desire for a man, which Elinor reads here to be shameful.

After receiving Willoughby's explanatory letter that ends Marianne's hopes, Elinor finds Marianne about to fall on the floor. This phenomenon is clearly explained by the narrator, however, not to be a sign or symptom of sensibility. This is a physical problem. Marianne was "faint and giddy from a long want of proper rest and food; for it was many days since she had any appetite, and many nights since she had really slept; and now, when her mind was no longer supported by the fever of suspense, the consequence of all this was felt in an aching head, a weakened stomach, and a general nervous faintness" (160). Marianne has real physical distress caused by the end of the "fever of suspense" that I think we are to read not as the mind breaking and causing the body to sicken (i.e. lovmadness) but as the sudden loss of adrenalin or what Austen terms the "fever of suspense," which had both suppressed her body's physiological needs and then left her in the full knowledge of them. Austen establishes lack of sleep and lack of food as having a physical effect on the body that must be ministered to. Austen does not allow Marianne's body to break from mental and emotional strain alone; she embeds physical causes to the physical stress Marianne endures. Through Marianne's choices not to eat and not to sleep in London as she anticipates a meeting with Willoughby, Austen reinforces that the lovesickness that her heroine succumbs to is somewhat voluntary, and the physicality of Marianne's ailment establishes her lovesickness as not madness.

However, Marianne is not in need of medical attention; the doctor is not called to minister to her after the shocking revelation of Willoughby's engagement. Instead, quiet, solitude, and certain small female remedies from Mrs. Jennings are all that are

spoken of in the text as necessary aids. Roy and Dorothy Porter write that sick people sometimes took medicine, sometimes used home remedies, and sometimes just used change, diversion, and travel (261-2). Austen uses all these remedies for Marianne. Elinor applies lavender water (153) to Marianne after her last encounter with Willoughby and takes Marianne home where "hartshorn restored her a little to herself" (154). Ground hart's horn as a medicine reveals some of the literary influence in health care at the time. Not only does the imbibing of a deer's antler, and thus the sign of its maleness, seem an appropriate remedy for the woman who has been cleft from the significant male in her life, but the running together of the words allows "hart's horn" to be also read as "heart shorn." What cure could be more appropriate to the broken heart than the medicine whose name sounds like the cleft organ that it is supposed to cure? Later, Marianne is made more comfortable with a glass of wine after Willoughby's letter leaves her perfectly weak (160); however, these treatments seem to be rather ineffective.

Elinor does not put much faith in the home remedies for lovesickness, but she does attempt to cure Marianne through rhetoric. Elinor does not judge the actions that lead to Marianne's present distress. However, she speaks of Marianne's duty to fight her symptoms; "'Exert yourself, dear Marianne,' she cried, 'if you would not kill yourself and all who love you. Think of your mother; think of her misery while *you* suffer; for her sake you must exert yourself'" (160). She speaks of a lack of exertion as matricide; she places Marianne in the position of control over her own life and health as well as the life and health of "all who love" her. Elinor begs Marianne to see those about her who do love her and to fight her symptoms for their sakes. She codes her appeal in the language

of literary lovesickness that means so much to Marianne. She claims to be worried about the contagion of lovesickness. Elinor places herself and her mother in the position of suitors: they love Marianne and they stand in jeopardy of contracting a life-threatening lovesickness if they lose her to her own lovesickness for Willoughby. Of course, Elinor does not believe that Marianne's current distress is life-threatening or that Mrs. Dashwood and she stand to contract a real physical illness. By expressing Mrs. Dashwood's and Elinor's danger at Marianne's death, Elinor is establishing Marianne's value to them. Elinor is doing the important work of re-establishing Marianne in the context of the family she thought she was leaving for marriage to Willoughby. Instead of devaluing Marianne because of her loss of bloom as John Dashwood does, Elinor seeks to reverse Marianne's devaluation by becoming a sororal suitor to her, loving Marianne more in her abandonment and illness, loving her like she loves her own life.

Elinor's rhetorical cure is important because it provides Marianne a way out of performing lovesickness. The trap of lovesickness is the assumption of a symptomatic identity that must become permanent for the thwarted love to be read by others as true love. Marianne is aware that as a lovesick woman she has new identity, status, and control over others. She is granted attention, care, and power to keep silent about a relationship about which it pains her to speak. She also has the freedom to refuse to conform to social expectations for single young ladies, a deviance that John Dashwood will later write off as bad humor over losing the value of her bloom in a marriage market. Marianne, however, has a dilemma. Her half-brother may pay so little attention to his sisters that he can deplore her bloom being lost to a random illness, but a

significant group of Marianne's possible London society have seen her at a party approaching a single man, admit to writing to him, and exclaim loudly her distress at his overly correct greeting and dismissal of her. She has identified herself as a woman carelessly and passionately lost to love. She takes herself off of the marriage market when she clearly establishes her attachment to a single man. While the narrator makes clear that she really feels the loss of Willoughby in a profound way, Marianne must now reinforce that message to those who are watching her, or Marianne's identity can be established as a coquette. She might be seen as a dangerous flirt like Lucy Steele, trying to trap a gentleman into marrying her, or she might be seen as a silly coquette like the elder Miss Steele, giggling and blushing over the mythical conquest of a doctor, who nobody really believes cares that she is alive. Marianne's abhorrence of the Misses Steele explains her reluctance to shake off Willoughby's rejection and be seen by society as another poor, social climbing young lady.

That Elinor's rhetorical cure, a reorientation and revaluation of identity, has a chance to be successful is seen in Marianne's gradual return to the society of others. Marianne has bankrupted her value as a single young woman sought after by single young men, but Elinor allows her to sidestep the need to establish herself as a young lady in London society by reinstating Marianne into the love of her family. Marianne can choose to live for a romanticized familial love that, predating her love of Willoughby, does not betray the love she claims to have for him. Marianne is no coquette, and yet because of Elinor's wooing the return of her sister, Marianne will be able to escape her symptomatic identity when she is no longer in need of comfort for her loss.

While not medically beneficial, a continued application of home remedies reaffirm over and over that Marianne is surrounded by those who care about her and are thinking of her. When "no attitude could give [Marianne] ease; and in restless pain of mind and body she moved from one posture to another, till growing more and more hysterical, her sister could with difficulty keep her on the bed at all, and for some time was fearful of being constrained to call for assistance" (166), Elinor gives her lavender drops, "which were of some use" (166). Mrs. Jennings provides remedies, and Elinor laughs at them (167). She invites the Parrys and Sandersons to dinner to entertain Marianne, and offers her "the best place by the fire, [she] was to be tempted to eat by every delicacy in the house, and to be amused by the relation of all the news of the day" (167). Mrs. Jennings desires to distract Marianne from the thoughts she must have in the solitude and quiet she prefers. Mrs. Jennings also brings a glass of the finest old Constantia in the house, and "Elinor, as she swallowed the chief of it [since Marianne was already in bed], reflected that, though its good effects on a cholicky gout were, at present, of little importance to her, its healing powers on a disappointed heart might be reasonably tried on herself as on her sister" (172). Elinor is not expressing much faith in wine as a cure for heartache. She knows because of her own thwarted love that Marianne's condition is not in need of medicinal treatment, and that no wine will assuage their mutual ailment. Kaplan and Kaplan assert that Austen's "acute observation of life and society parallels quite closely the few medical treatises of the time that one finds readable and/or comprehensible now" (117). She seems to have had a good grasp of early nineteenth-century medicine, and her mockery of it is an acknowledgement that

the female broken heart is not a condition that medical practitioners can cure because it is more a literary, rhetorical, and social ailment than it is a physical one.

Amusement and change of scene were often thought to be cures of lovesickness. Marianne desires to return to her mother in the country after reading the letter that ends her hopes of being Mrs. Willoughby, but "Mrs. Dashwood had determined that it would be better for Marianne to be anywhere, at that time, than at Barton, where every thing within her view would be bringing back the past in the strongest and most afflicting manner, by constantly placing Willoughby before her, such as she had always seen him there" (185). Thus, Marianne needs protection from the happy memories that would be before her in the country. Although Marianne is jilted in London, her prolonged visit there may provide better amusement and thus distraction from her heartache than the limited country setting and society that her mother's home provides. Distraction from the self is an acknowledged treatment that Mrs. Dashwood knowingly uses, hoping that a "variety of occupations, of objects, and of company, which could not be procured at Barton, would be inevitable there, and might yet, she hoped, cheat Marianne, at times, into some interest beyond herself, and even into some amusement, much as the idea of both might now be spurned by her" (185-6). Mrs. Dashwood, who has more of an emotional understanding of Marianne than of Elinor, realizes that the inevitable distraction of a London season would "cheat Marianne" into "interest beyond herself." She seems to recognize that the type of grief inherent in lovesickness is by definition a selfish one. The fact that she is aware of cheating Marianne of something establishes both that there is value in a woman being able to be interested in herself for a while and

that some intervention must occur with the lovesick woman to ensure that she does not learn to find her self-interest too precious. Distraction thus brings the young woman back out of an understanding of her own needs and desires, and change of scene from Barton Cottage is the most logical remedy, derived from the very description of the ailment itself. Love between a young man and woman was often described metaphorically as an "attachment."¹⁵ Thus, a disjuncting, even a change of geography, prompts a sense of change and actual or physical detachment that provides a reason for the unsettled feelings that a break-up inevitably creates.

Marianne's sickness takes a more serious turn; one that is treated by Austen's narrator in a very different tone that is no longer even slightly mocking. Fever has long been equated to love in literary terms, and we have already noted Elinor's perception that Marianne would have acted more favorably to a suitor who burned with fever than to one who wore flannel waistcoats to keep from shaking with chills. Marianne's walk in the rain and disregard of the dangers of wet and cold on her constitution is the onset of the most full and most dangerous form of lovesickness -- the lovesickness that can kill.¹⁶ Marianne's body does not break from her emotional trauma alone, but from her disregarding basic nineteenth-century health care. Kaplan and Kaplan quote the "Medical Report" of November, 1809 to explain Marianne's fever as an extension of hysteria begun in London and dormant until Cleveland; "[t]he exciting cause of hysteria is not always apparent or to be ascertained. It is frequently occasioned by emotions of the heart and passions of the mind, and may not occur till some time after the impression has been made" (126). While time passes and Marianne shows signs of recovery from

the symptoms she has exhibited in London before she presents the dangerous physical symptoms she incubates at Cleveland, Marianne's fever is not hysteria.

The fever that Marianne induces is less the result of pent up thwarted desire that erupts into dangerous illness at Cleveland than a dangerous participation in lovesickness. Kaplan and Kaplan assert, "all the characters in *Sense and Sensibility* focus their attention on the link between weather and illness, and in this concern art certainly imitates life" (122). Austen presents the reader with a physical, not emotional or psychological cause for Marianne's fever. Two solitary,

twilight walks on the third and fourth evenings of her being there . . .
[where] the grass was the longest and wettest, had – assisted by the still
greater imprudence of sitting in her wet shoes and stockings – given
Marianne a cold so violent, as, though for a day or two trifled with or
denied, would force itself by increasing ailments, on the concern of every
body, and the notice of herself. . . . Though heavy and feverish, with a
pain in her limbs, a cough, and a sore throat, a good night's rest was to
cure her entirely. (267)

Marianne has contracted a cold that is seemingly unrelated to lovesickness. Indeed, Kaplan and Kaplan note, "Georgians were consumed by the thought that 'wet shoes and stockings' (306) made the body susceptible to illness" (123). Austen's planting of physical reasons for Marianne's physical illness seem to relieve Marianne of responsibility for the contraction of this illness. However, wet shoes and stockings do not give any Georgian a fever; they only have the power to infect the girl who is too

“imprudent” to take them off. Marianne does not seem desirous of being ill. Her proximity to Combe Magna throws her back into a participation in a performative lovesickness that demands a lack of self-care in direct response to the loss of value in her lover’s eyes, and Elinor’s earlier rhetorical cure is based upon an understanding that Marianne’s exerting herself to reject the behaviors of lovesickness is her choice.

Marianne’s emotional state contributes not only to her contraction of but also to her demeanor during this physical illness. Marianne worsens upon realizing that her sickness is preventing her and Elinor from going home on schedule; “the idea of what tomorrow would have produced, but for this unlucky illness, made every ailment more severe” (269). After sleeping for some time, Marianne

became more and more disturbed; and her sister, who watched with unremitting attention her continual change of posture, and heard the frequent but inarticulate sounds of complaint which passed her lips, was almost wishing to rouse her from so painful a slumber, when Marianne, suddenly awakened by some accidental noise in the house, started hastily up, and with feverish wildness, cried out – ‘Is mama coming?’ (271)

Marianne ends an uncomfortable sleep with a delirium, “feverish wildness” and declares her desire for her mother’s presence. Here, Marianne exhibits symptoms of madness, which Helen Small diagnoses as lovemadness; however, Austen attributes Marianne’s “wildness” to fever, a delirium of somatic origin. Austen’s heroine’s fever is caused by wet grass and her delirium is caused by fever. Elinor feels that her pulse is “lower and quicker than ever” (271) and is increasingly fearful of the power of this illness. Austen

may have made it textually obvious that Marianne's delirium is of somatic origin and is not produced by her lingering love of Willoughby, but that does not make it less interpretable. Marianne's proximity to Combe Magna does not cause her to lose her reason or become a madwoman. However, her adherence to an understanding of herself as bereft of value leads to the lack of self-discipline and self-care that result in her feverish emptying of self. Seen as a loss of value and a confusion of identity (one day the beloved of Willoughby and future mistress of Allenham, next day an odd woman, a dependent with no real income), Marianne's loss of love asserts itself in her participation in lovesickness and makes this physically contracted illness a perfect trope for her symptomatic identity.

Marianne benefits by acquiring a physical illness. John Wiltshire writes of sickness in language akin to Foucault's *Birth of the Clinic*; "[i]llness is constructed into disease, sickness labelled, validated by the authority of the medical profession, put into circulation; and this public understanding becomes, unavoidably, part of the way the patient now lives and thinks her illness" (127). There is legitimacy associated with a "medical" and, therefore, in the nineteenth century, a male opinion. The Palmer's apothecary is called to diagnose Marianne. He does not speak of frayed nerves or a shattered heart. Mr. Harris is optimistic, yet declares "her disorder to have a putrid tendency, and allow[s] the word 'infection' to pass his lips" (268). For the protection of the Palmer infant, Mr. and Mrs. Palmer leave their home with Marianne in full possession of the house. Marianne gains the right to the care of others and the possession of the house itself. She has a limited power over the management of others' homes

because her physical debilities must be accommodated, but she controls passively and at considerable self-expense. The narrator mentions that she “was of course kept in ignorance of all these arrangements” (270) as if it could injure her sensibilities to know that she is the means of sending the owners of the house away. Marianne’s sensibilities relating to propriety are not as sensitive as those caring for her anticipate, for she doesn’t even notice that her host and hostess are missing. Marianne’s illness prompts a response from her guardian and family friend. While the Palmers vacate their own home, Mrs. Jennings stays to nurse (269), and Col. Brandon stays to wait upon the ladies and allows his actions to be directed by them. Because of Marianne’s illness, he is sent to fetch Mrs. Dashwood, and he quickly rides at the female command that sends him. The apothecary’s earlier optimism is not warranted, for we read that Mr. Harris’ “medicines had failed; -- the fever was unabated; and Marianne only more quiet – not more herself – remained in an heavy stupor” (274). Elinor, who is a wonderful nurse, does not think she can talk Marianne out of this fever as she earlier attempted with a rhetorical treatment to talk Marianne out of her less physical performative lovesickness. Elinor does not speak of exertion or laugh at the idea of there being a physical cure for this fever. Elinor skips sleep and administers Mr. Harris’ drugs exactly as he has ordered them. Marianne has a right to be coddled by others because she has incubated a dangerous illness: “Every thing that could do to render her comfortable, was the office of each watchful companion, and each found their reward in her bodily ease, and her calmness of spirits” (299). This entire community turns upside down for Marianne’s comfort. Her delirium is a good way to symbolize her drifting sense of identity, but it is

not written as her body's breaking because her mind unravels or because her heart breaks. Marianne's recovery from this fever is a recovery of her body, but while her disease is not caused by her heart's pain, her body's healing is read as a forecast that a complementary recovery of her sense of self will transpire.

After establishing a scenario in which Marianne's illness has been legitimized by medical opinion and by bodily function, Austen proceeds to "read" Marianne's fever as metaphor through other characters' reaction to it. While the narrator establishes that the fever is brought on by damp and cold, poor Mrs. Jennings feels a social culpability because Marianne "had been for three months her companion, was still under her care, and she was known to have been greatly injured, and long unhappy" (274). Justified or not by medical opinion, there will be a social judgment on Mrs. Jennings for not having provided Marianne with better care. The narrator tells us that Mrs. Jennings "scrupled not to attribute the severity and danger of this attack, to the many weeks of previous indisposition which Marianne's disappointment had brought on. Elinor felt the reasonableness of the idea, and it gave fresh misery to her reflections" (274). Kaplan and Kaplan write that "the Georgians would have believed that Marianne's acute susceptibility to life-threatening illness was brought on by what Heberden lists as 'Hysterical Affections' – that is, by Marianne's focusing too much on her heartache – and by carelessly exposing herself to the elements" (125). Gorman separates Marianne's physical illness from her earlier hysteria or madness and believes that the second illness reinforces the belief that mental anguish causes an environment ripe for sickness; and that the choice not to participate in life is death (55). Mrs. Jennings is not the only one to

read Marianne's fever as a metaphor for the identity crisis caused by thwarted love, nor is she alone in accepting social responsibility.

Even Mrs. Dashwood feels incredible relief at Marianne's recovery, not only from fear of losing her, but from fear of losing her to "a danger in which, as she now began to feel, her own mistaken judgment in encouraging the unfortunate attachment to Willoughby, had contributed to place her" (294). After Austen has established the disconnection between Marianne's fever and her sensibilities, Mrs. Dashwood and society read Marianne's illness as the direct result of her broken heart. Susan Morgan agrees that this view is present in the text and notes, "Marianne's vision is a killing one and the resistance to truths that can change appropriately results in her literally almost killing herself" (199). This reading of Marianne presents her as incapable of seeing a future apart from Willoughby, and the inability to change gives Marianne no ability to live without the life she believed was to be hers. This reading places Marianne firmly in association with lovesick women who die when they cannot live for the man they love, but this reading overlooks Marianne's earlier recovery after Elinor applies her rhetorical cure. Eva Brann notes, "We see in this episode the excesses of Marianne's sensibility, the romanticism that Elinor recognizes with concern in her sister at that very beginning of the book" (131). What Brann astutely points to is that a broken heart is not responsible for this illness; Marianne's understanding of how a broken heart is to be performed is. Mrs. Dashwood feels guilt for raising Marianne with too firm a reliance on a literary understanding of life, love, and the importance of first attachments, and the text supports her self-analytical guilt.

Marianne herself later confirms these interpretations. The narrator reads a promise of cure for Marianne's identity crisis in the cure for her fever. Her recovery is relayed in both physical and emotional terms; "The next morning produced no abatement in these happy symptoms. On the contrary, with a mind and body alike strengthened by rest, she looked and spoke with more genuine spirit" (300). Just as Marianne's emotional distress at separation from her Willoughby has twice been conveyed to the reader through her emotional and physical symptoms, so now is Marianne read as healthy in the terms of "happy symptoms." These symptoms are proofs of her strengthening mind and body, and produce "more genuine spirit." Marianne has been without spirit because she was delirious; however, I think we are to read Marianne's recovery of "spirit" from her deliriousness as a sign of Marianne's recovery of her sense of self – a stable identity based upon her acceptance of her loss of Willoughby. The narrator reveals a direct link in renewed health of psyche and soma. Marianne analyzes her illness to Elinor, "I saw that my own feelings had prepared my sufferings, and that my want of fortitude under them had almost led me to the grave. My illness, I well knew, had been entirely brought on by myself, by such negligence of my own health, as I had felt even at the time to be wrong. Had I died, -- it would have been self-destruction" (303). Austen shows that the woman who gets sick after loss of love is the woman who courts physical illness. While she acknowledges that she will not forget Willoughby, Marianne declares that "[h]is remembrance can be overcome by no change of circumstances or opinions. But it shall be regulated, it shall be checked by religion, by reason, by constant employment" (305). Marianne accepts Elinor's prescription of

employment and exertion for her emotional hurts after her body recovers from its physical illness. Austen attaches a moral stigma – the stigma of suicide – to the woman who enacts the physical aspects of lovesickness by interpreting Marianne’s fever, which she contracts from wet grass, as Marianne’s choice.

By having Marianne walk in the rain to contract her fever, Austen refuses to accept the limiting picture of woman as ready to sicken with any assault on her emotions. Bailin writes that in novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, “emotional crises articulate themselves with great lucidity and promptitude on the bodies of those who experience them” (10). Austen challenges this assumption even as she incorporates female heartbreak and sickness into it. After recovering from her physical illness, Marianne learns that she has participated in a limiting performance of the lovesickness tradition. Deborah Kaplan writes, “when Austen’s fictional characters realize that their powers are insufficient or illusory, they are in the process of achieving real authority, rather than accepting a tragically reduced version of themselves” (547). Austen writes of an entirely physical disease that is no more than a side effect of Marianne’s treatment of her broken heart. Marianne’s loss of love does not cause it, but her adherence to a social code that requires lack of self-care does. Austen revises social theory about the relation of female psyche to soma through her revision of the literary conventions of lovesickness. To be feverish is to be capable of healing, and healing from an identity-obliterating sickness involves the possibility of recreating one’s self. Marianne can and does learn how to negotiate social codes in the construction of a new identity for herself. By allowing a heroine to perform lovesickness, Austen negates the

social and medical theories that present women as emotionally susceptible, sickening bodies.

Austen's female characters are in partial control of the symptoms they reveal. The ability to keep secrets about whom they love shows that a woman's performing lovesickness is a choice. Symptoms do not have to be presented to a straightforward public reading. When Elinor hears of Lucy's engagement, she does not believe it and so is "in no danger of an hysterical fit, or a swoon" (111). Upon Lucy's producing a letter from Edward, however, Elinor "was almost overcome--her heart sank within her, and she could hardly stand; but exertion was indispensably necessary, and she struggled so resolutely against the oppression of her feelings, that her success was speedy, and for the time complete" (116). Elinor feels a predisposition to the symptoms of lovesickness as well as Marianne, but her pride does not allow her to behave according to a social code that will reveal her pain to a rival. Indeed, Marianne misreads Elinor as having little desire for Edward. Elinor's defense to Marianne of her ability to keep her pain a secret explains the process of having a grief or heartache without exhibiting physical sickness; "The composure of mind with which I have brought myself at present to consider the matter, the consolation that I have been willing to admit, have been the effect of constant and painful exertion; -- they did not spring up of themselves; -- they did not occur to relieve my spirits at first" (230). Elinor has to fight a desire to exhibit symptoms. She does so because she knows that she will not receive aid for her visible suffering, but the triumph of a rival. What does not relieve her spirits at first, however, seems to provide comfort later. Laurie and Richard S. Kaplan write that *Sense and Sensibility* "is a book in

which Marianne, a most delightful and charming heroine, is essentially paralyzed by her grief over her lost lover, while her sister Elinor hides her own sadness over disappointed love by burying herself in action and good works – Dr. Heberden [a famous physician-writer who died in 1801] would have called her activity ‘application’ and ‘employment’” (118). While application and employment do not provide immediate relief, the refusal to perform lovesickness protects Elinor from Lucy’s character assaults and gives her time to redefine Edward’s and her feelings for each other so that she can understand herself to be valued by him and thwarted in love at the same time.

Austen shows that presenting symptoms of lovesickness empowers one to be selfish, to demand attention, and even to be rude. Lucy maliciously causes Elinor pain by making repeated confidences about Edward’s affections that relieve her own apparent sufferings, while Elinor must hide her feelings ever more carefully. As Small acknowledges, Lucy has a real advantage over Elinor because her possession of Edward’s miniature provides her with the sign of his love (94). The nineteenth-century literary lovesickness tradition enables Lucy to perform lovesickness as it constricts Elinor’s choices. Elinor must give aid to the lovesick Lucy, or she must reveal her own inappropriate love for an engaged man, even though Lucy’s tears and agitations are later proven to be fake when she leaves Edward for his rich older brother. Through her fear of revealing her heartache, Elinor reveals a stigma that is associated with the girl who presents lovesick symptoms. Because Elinor is more attuned to propriety and social shame, Elinor understands before Marianne does that sensibility provides agency, but not a socially acceptable agency to a single girl. Her desire for Edward is only

acceptable, and therefore can only be voiced and embodied, in response to Edward's initial love and expression of desire for her. Marianne accurately reads Edward's body, sees that Edward likes her sister and wonders why Elinor does not write, command him to visit, or weep until that visit is necessary for her health, but Elinor understands that a thing felt and a thing spoken into existence are different. She can love, be confident in his returned affections, and never hint that that is the case to the only woman who has received the promise of his protection and name. Elinor knows Edward's affections have shifted from Lucy to herself, and she knows that Lucy will make him a poor and foolish wife, but she also knows well before Marianne does that marriage is not based on romantic love alone. With Lucy's proof of her secret engagement to Edward, Elinor knows that Edward is lost to her, not through lack of romantic love or desire, but through honor.

Lucy wishes to read Elinor's silences as lovesickness, but to protect herself Elinor uses the same technique that Marianne uses to read Col. Brandon. Elinor provides alternate readings of her own body to counter Lucy's readings of her. After the Dashwood dinner party where she is much admired by Mrs. Ferrars and Mrs. Dashwood, Lucy visits Elinor to gloat and notes, "you seem low – you don't speak; -- sure you an't well?" (209). Elinor counters that she "never was in better health" (209), but Lucy insists with an insulting masquerade of concern that she "is very glad of it with all my heart, but really you did not look it" (209). David Kaufmann writes, "Elinor lies to Lucy Steele in order to protect her dignity, in order to circumvent Lucy's protracted assault on her feelings. Elinor is practicing a form of emotional aikido: she deflects Lucy's attacks

by protecting the privacy of her affections” (391). Elinor attempts to mask her emotional distance from her “friend” with assertions of her physical health. Lucy can still read Elinor’s spirits however she wishes, but Elinor’s control comes in her presentation of a competing reading of her symptoms. Lucy is powerful, wielding her performance of lovesickness as a weapon to provoke Elinor’s performance of her broken heart and inappropriate desire. However, Elinor verbally acknowledges an alternate reading of physical health, a reading that does not require her to accept social shame.

Women can elaborate upon symptoms of ill health to mask theirs or other women’s feelings from those not in their immediate circle. When Marianne expects Willoughby’s visit in London and is instead disappointed by Col. Brandon’s arrival, Col. Brandon asks Elinor, “Is your sister ill?” (140). Elinor replies by talking of “head-aches, low spirits, and over fatigues; and of everything to which she could decently attribute her sister’s behaviour” (140). While listing a set of symptoms that are commonly associated with lovesickness, she is attempting to mask Marianne’s metaphysical ailment with a screen of physical symptoms. Armstrong notes that there is a tradition that both “Austen and Burney scrupulously observe along with conduct-book authors. It is a woman’s participation in public spectacle that injures her, for as an object of display, she always loses value as a subject” (116). It would not be decent to acknowledge Marianne’s lovesickness, particularly to a rival suitor, so Elinor retreats to symptomatology as a source of Marianne’s negative emotions and lack of emotional control.

Elinor also hides Marianne’s behavior behind a curtain of illness from their brother and the Misses Steele. She tells Lucy upon Marianne’s leaving the room at their

arrival, “she has been much plagued lately with nervous head-aches, which make her unfit for company or conversation” (191). The same symptoms that Marianne is so sure connote lovesickness within her family are also a disguise for that very malady from lesser relations. The older Miss Steele is constantly threatening to reveal her younger sister Lucy’s secrets to the public. Instead of gratifying her visitors with gossip surrounding Marianne’s love life, Elinor accepts Miss Steele’s diagnosis that Marianne “is not well” (191) and contains the discussion of sickness within purely physical parameters, not the emotional ones that the Misses Steele would be more interested in. Elinor protects Marianne from their brother’s attentions as well by declaring her condition a “nervous complaint” (198) that has plagued her for several weeks, when he suggests, “she looks very unwell, has lost her colour, and is grown quite thin” (198). Christine Richards writes that Elinor “can therefore be seen to be playing a significant part in developing the myth of her sister’s illness” (87). Richards refers to the “myth” of Marianne’s illness because she believes Elinor’s reading of Marianne. Elinor mythologizes Marianne’s social indiscretions into physical and emotional illness. However, Marianne’s complaint is not all the stuff of myth. Marianne performs a conventional female lovesickness, but she does also manufacture the headaches and the fever that make her later illness all too real. When Elinor’s readings of Marianne become secondary to a doctor’s and Marianne no longer suffers from an identity crisis caused by her devaluation in Willoughby’s eyes but from fever, her illness is no longer a myth; however, the reading of it as lovesickness may be.

Not only does Austen catalogue a list of symptoms exhibited by her female characters as proof of their feelings, but she also shows that women are aware that they should express what they feel with their bodies. Marianne's refusal to temper or conceal the physical signs of her loss is oddly paralleled by characters who present to a public gaze fake symptoms that have no discernable emotive origin. Miss Steele pretends that her good doctor is pursuing her and that he acts purposely to make her giggle and blush. This reveals the problem with representing the body as a thing-to-be-read. O'Farrell writes that identifying the blush means seeing it as writing on and of the body; it is a product of somatic agency (3). However, the problem of the blush is that it is either deep personal truth or it is a response to outward pressure (O'Farrell 111), and it is impossible to tell the difference. If the body is a text to be read, it is a text that can be misread. Austen often has characters reading the right things on bodies, but in the wrong contexts. Emma reads Frank Churchill's love, but she mistakes it as love for herself instead of love for Jane Fairfax. Emma reads Jane's invalidism as a sign of great good breeding, but misunderstands that it is good breeding that has been disappointed by its bad behavior (entering a secret engagement). The Austenian body does reveal, but the key to interpreting the revelation accurately is usually temporarily lost.

While lovesickness empowers a woman to exhibit behaviors that were never otherwise socially acceptable, Austen makes the nature of a woman's participation in lovesick symptomatology a sign of her worth. Lucy, who enjoys inflicting pain by her repeated reminders of her secret engagement, cannot do so innocently in an Austen text. Diane Price Herndl declares that when women teach that sickness and death offer them

the best route to power, we all suffer the loss of possibilities. She insists that there is “nothing empowering about victimage” (3). Austen very much disagrees with her, showing the women in her text to be empowered, even when they choose weakness or dependence as a defense of their use of that power. Instead of denying that women can gain power by their adoption of symptomatic identities that coerce female friends or even coerce a man to marry where he has ceased to love yet needs to protect his honor,¹⁷ Austen’s texts argue that the women who do so are morally suspect. Austen shows women gaining social power through performances of lovesickness, and their only real penalty for wielding social power is not to be found in their society, but in the narrator’s treatment of them and in the reader’s dislike of them. Lucy is condemned to the disgust of the reader and to the image of a vicious social climber, while Elinor, who never openly performs her lovesickness, and Marianne, who comes to a realization that her performance of lovesickness has been wrong, are loved by the reader for them.

Austen shows that just as women’s bodies are texts available to others to read as they will, so too can women’s symptoms be misread, and participation in the lovesickness tradition can bring meddling instead of sympathy. Lovesickness provides beneficial nonverbal communication; a woman’s physical distress can reveal her attachment to her lover. However, we have already seen that Marianne’s participation in lovesickness makes her family loathe to talk to her about her relationship with Willoughby out of a fear of increasing pain, which allows Marianne to hide an improper level of attachment to a man who has not proposed. Elinor writes from London to compel her mother to gain Marianne’s confidence about her relationship with

Willoughby by "awakening her fears for the health of Marianne" (148). Just as a health concern gains power for the invalid by requiring aid, it also gives power to the giver of aid by requiring their intervention in affairs of the heart. Elinor wishes her mother would meddle in Marianne's love life to prevent a possible impropriety, so she writes to her mother in terms of Marianne's unstable health. While participation in lovesickness can reveal love, it can also empower others to meddle for fear of what participation in lovesickness can conceal.

Marianne's participation in lovesickness allows her to be read by others as having a heartache, and she is generally supported through her loss of love by her family and immediate community because of it; Elinor, however, is misjudged through the greater part of the novel as not feeling a loss.¹⁸ Even Marianne, who shares the closest feelings with her sister, misreads them; Elinor's "self-command she settled very easily; -with strong affections it was impossible, with calm ones it could have no merit" (90). Even with the disclosure of Edward's engagement, Elinor must prove her feelings to be strong because her behavior and body give no support to her claims that she is miserably in love. Marianne accuses her of not truly loving, "if the loss of what is most valued is so easily to be made up by something else, your resolution, your self-command, are, perhaps, a little less to be wondered at" (229). Marianne may impugn Elinor's feelings, but Gorman posits that the failure to faint is a sign of inward strength in Austen's mature works (35). Elinor assures her that "if I had not been bound to silence, perhaps nothing could have kept me entirely . . . from openly shewing that I was *very* unhappy" (230). Believing that had she not been bound by secrecy most likely "nothing could have kept"

her from showing how unhappy she was, Elinor supports this novel's understanding of lovesickness as attractive to women. That Elinor sees the appeal of lovesickness reinforces the value of a woman's being able to focus on herself until she is cheated out of her lovesickness. Elinor reveals the inequity of participatory lovesickness for women: the girls presenting symptoms of lovesickness do so at the expense of the girls who hide their symptoms and their feelings for propriety's sake. Mrs. Dashwood declares herself "one of the happiest women in the world" (294) because of Marianne's recovery, and "trusting to the temperate account of her own disappointment which Elinor had sent her, was led away by the exuberance of her joy to think only of what would increase it" (294). Brodey acknowledges that both Marianne and Mrs. Dashwood "mistake 'Elinor's representation of herself' (SS, p. 355) for Elinor's actual internal state and mistake self-control for lack of real feeling" (124). So Elinor is refused the comfort of her mother knowing her pain by the very restraint, propriety, and reason that the narrator sanctions over Marianne's determined melancholy.

Mrs. Dashwood eventually comes to recognize the power and beauty of reason and self-control over a woman's conduct; she recognizes that there is an attractive set of social assumptions about women and thwarted love that competes with the attractive symptomatic identity disclosed through lovesickness, sensibility, and first attachments. She sees that her ideas about women being necessarily governed by their emotions were wrong. She finds that she has erred in relying on Elinor's representation of herself:

She feared that under this persuasion she had been unjust, inattentive, nay, almost unkind, to her Elinor; -- that Marianne's affliction, because

more acknowledged, more immediately before her, had too much engrossed her tenderness, and led her away to forget that in Elinor she might have a daughter suffering almost as much, certainly with less self-provocation, and greater fortitude. (312)

While Mrs. Dashwood and Marianne's recognition of Elinor's pain is too late to make the more stoic, private participation in lovesickness desirable, Austen has embedded a sense of honor in repressed lovesickness. Marianne embodies an eighteenth-century ideal of sensibility, which is the open acknowledgment of one's true feelings, while Elinor models another ideal, which is that of a woman who feels deeply and voices her feelings only when they will not injure others. In *Repression in Victorian Fiction: Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot, and Charles Dickens*, John Kucich discusses the nineteenth-century cultural decision to value silenced or negated feeling over affirmed feeling, and the corresponding cultural prohibitions placed on display, disclosure, confession, and assertion (3). Elinor participates in a lovesickness tradition that she does not perform. She feels deeply the loss of what she believes is the only man she will ever love, but she refuses to present the symptoms of her emotional loss on her body. She illustrates the power and passion of stoicism even as she admits that she probably would have exhibited some signs of lovesickness had she not been bound by a prior secret.

Instead of finding power in having been jilted and in the corresponding need for social sympathy, Elinor illustrates what Kucich considers a Victorian approach to power; "Victorian repression serves interpersonal or social struggles for power, as an instrument of the self that maintains its distance from others, and locates authority in the

psychological and emotional merits of personal desire rather than in submergence of individuals within the force of a group” (27). Elinor Dashwood forecasts a whole new kind of heroine who emerges in English literature later in the century and who finds self-controlled repression to be a power more desired than that which can be wielded over others through manipulations of health care. In *The Novel and the Police*, D. A. Miller notes that power is seen in private people or in detectives who focus on trivia and reveal truth by showing what information is important and what should be discarded (35).

Elinor is shown to have this power. She misreads others the least in the text, and she thwarts others from reading her as well. Without ever completely disenfranchising the symptomatic identity of its power and appeal, however, Austen is able to reveal other types of power. In this case, she shows public and private power in their various contexts. Austen reveals that how a person deals with loss of love is more intimately related to her understanding of cultural expectation surrounding the performance of lovesickness than to how deeply that person felt her loss of love in the first place.

Austen’s narrator’s praise of Elinor’s behavior and Marianne’s castigation of herself makes nineteenth-century woman’s performance of lovesickness a choice. Barthes insists that “I love you” is a performative that is always true as it is said (148). But what Austen makes clear in her novels is that around the performance of saying the words “I love you” is an odd space that contains a myriad of social behaviors selected by a woman to express the love she feels. Her choices are directed by the social mores she holds to be true: in Elinor’s case stoicism, in Marianne’s sensibility, and in Lucy’s self-preservation. Austen’s corrective to conventional lovesickness is that women may

choose which behaviors and symptoms to manifest on their bodies for public reading. This is different from a lovesickness that a lady has no choice but to enact (if she loses her love, her body or her mind must break). All of Austen's women must interact with the performance of female lovesickness, but they choose how they will participate in it. Thus, while ten of Austen's female characters may love, each may experience and express that love through a profoundly different set of behaviors, deemed by each woman to be the most appropriate expression of her desire. While she may read her actions in a context of her own social beliefs, she is not exempt from the additional scrutiny of society at large and its praise or censure of the social code exhibited by her participation with the conventional lovesickness schema.

Austen disproves that lives are ruined from lost love. Women in an Austen novel are not forced by Nature to get their relationships right the first time any more than the men who jilt them. As Anita Gorman notes, all of Austen's heroines must accept the possibility of an unhappy ending to earn their happy ending (38). Austen uses literary lovesickness in her novel to show that it is crucially important for women to be able to reimagine themselves. Brodey writes that "as she reclaims sensibility for her own ethical and aesthetic purposes, Austen reclaims propriety, civility, and manners as contributors to individual happiness, as protectors of virtue, and even as picturesque adornments of the social landscape" (124). Just as Marianne survived her imagination of herself as mistress of Allenhurst to find herself the mistress of a different and unencumbered estate with a kinder, if plainer, husband, the model woman Austen advocates is one who forms her opinions and view of herself not based upon fashionable

ideology like sensibility or the seriously limiting ideologies of the conduct book or lovesickness.

Jane Austen presents her heroines as readers who can successfully identify and incorporate multiple codes of conduct into their lives as need be. In *Strange Gourmets: Sophistication, Theory, and the Novel*, Joseph Litvak writes that nineteenth-century fiction “teaches its readers *how to act* by dramatizing the considerable power and prestige to be gained through a sophisticated manipulation of cultural codes” (14). Litvak notes the importance of conduct-book manners in Austen’s literary world, where girls who successfully manipulate conduct-book etiquette in order to gain power are rewarded by marrying the man they want (14). Thus, conduct books teach sophistication: the creative interposition of propriety versus impropriety (Litvak 14). Austen reveals in *Sense and Sensibility* how society combines the joy of reading with the authority of medicine by presenting lovesickness, sensibility, and the ideology of first attachments as the conditions upon which a woman’s health depends.¹⁹ Marianne’s joy of reading transforms from the semi-private and authoritarian schooling of Willoughby’s taste to the later more public performance of sleeplessness, crying, headache and refusal of comfort that she displays for her family circle. As Knights asserts, “Those who read with passion expect to act out the morally superior world of their chosen texts – a potentially dangerous practice according to both reactionary and radical commentators” (22). Marianne reads literature and her life with passion. The display of lovesickness on her body is a participation in literary lovesickness that escalates until she manufactures a fever that almost kills her. But not all readers read with passion. Some, like Elinor, read

not to enter their relationships in direct performance of conventional love and lovesickness texts, but to participate in multiple codes of behavior at once, balancing the responsibilities she has towards her family, friends, and society at large with her feelings of lost love. Lucy Steele also learns to negotiate competing social codes without passion to her financial/matrimonial benefit. Austen rewards the readers who enrich themselves through their reading with an understanding of how to act according to several different codes at once. Litvak reads Austen's novels as education through intimidation (15).

Girls should be intimidated by the presentation of heroines who can perceive and manipulate social codes to their advantage and should desire to be sophisticated themselves. Barbara K. Seeber writes that "Austen incorporates contrary discourses, thus giving us a glimpse of the polyphonic world that the dominant ideology, in order to legitimize its hegemony, needs to repress" (229). Instead of graduates of any single school of ideology, Austen shows us women who, by remaining students, envision themselves as dynamic women capable of meeting a plethora of futures.

Women are not the only ones affected by conventions of literary love, nor are they the only ones who know to express their emotions through a posturing that participates in literary love. Marianne's famous fall down the hill and into the life of the passing Willoughby is a storybook fall into a storybook mentality, what Polhemus would call an erotic faith. Marianne, previously skeptical of her finding a lover to suit her exacting qualifications, finds that Willoughby's "person and air were equal to what her fancy had ever drawn for the hero of a favourite story" (36). Here, then, was the perfect character to fill a novel's pages, a hero active, gallant, and handsome.²⁰ Not only does

Willoughby look the part, but he also allows Marianne to correct his already promising romantic postures and opinions. The narrator informs us that Marianne would have recognized the heroic in the young Col. Brandon as well. When Col. Brandon begins to tell Elinor of the first Eliza, he cannot finish his comparison of her to Marianne, because he is overcome by emotion. Elinor suspects a previous attachment and ceases to think of it; however, we are told that Marianne would not have done so, for the "whole story would have been speedily formed under her active imagination; and every thing established in the most melancholy order of disastrous love" (49). Marianne is motivated to create stories and to center them on love and love's power to sicken. She writes others' stories as well as her own, which explains her frustration at Elinor's refusing to speak of her love of Edward in the words of the genre to which she adheres.

Willoughby is also influenced by Marianne to read and write of their love according to a literary convention. In his confession to Elinor at Cleveland after Marianne's infectious fever, Willoughby is very self-aware of its literary nature. In describing his receiving Marianne's letters, he notes that "Every line, every word was – in the hackneyed metaphor which their dear writer, were she here, would forbid – a dagger to my heart. To know that Marianne was in town was – in the same – language – a thunderbolt" (285). He critiques his own style when discussing the end of their relationship because its literariness was an important component to the couple. Inger Sigrun Thomsen notes, "Before finishing each sentence, he deliberates about which effect he would like to achieve, and he shows the shortcomings of each 'language' he speaks" (135). Willoughby speaks of Marianne as a fellow writer who has the power to

critique his craft, and even his self-critique is based upon the criteria set up by Marianne in her tutorials of him.

Before he jilts her, Willoughby presents Marianne as one who writes and critiques; after he jilts her, he shifts his presentation of Marianne to one who is to be read. Small, who focuses on the psychological state of women who have lost love in her book *Love's Madness: Medicine, the Novel, and Female Insanity, 1800-1865*, asserts that the presentation of the literary love-mad woman is not about a woman's self-expression but about others' finding expression through her (104). Small aptly notes that Marianne loses agency in her own story as Willoughby describes the night they met in London at the party:

I had seen Marianne's sweet face as white as death. – *That* was the last, last look I ever had of her; -- the last manner in which she appeared to me. It was a horrid sight! – Yet when I thought of her to-day as really dying, it was a kind of comfort to me to imagine that I knew exactly how she would appear to those, who saw her last in this world. She was before me, constantly before me, as I travelled, in the same look and hue.
(287)

Willoughby couches the terms of his crushing Marianne's hopes in the vocabulary of sickness and death. He also reads Marianne's physical sickness to be an extension of her lovesickness; he knows how she will look at her death because it is the same way she looked when he crushed her hopes of requited love. The attraction of participation in the lovesickness tradition is not limited to women. Willoughby is not attracted to the idea of

performing lovesickness on his own healthy body, but his determined connection of her loss of love with her death is a sign of his need to capture their relationship in terms of a literary love and lovesickness tradition in which the male lover reads the female's body and sees his own importance in its ultimate destruction. He is important because she cannot live without him.

Austen included another male character who participates in the lovesickness tradition. Col. Brandon also exhibits some of the signs of lovesickness that are conventionally associated with rejected suit. When he is separated from Eliza, he goes off to be active in the world. As a man, he can. Later, Elinor notices with concern "the earnestness with which he often watched Marianne, and his spirits were certainly worse than when at Barton" (146). While this level of lovesick response to a failed love affair is understandable (and perhaps expected to prove that Brandon really loves Marianne in the first place), it is also purely psychological. Brandon doesn't change his relationship to food (eat less), or to sleep, or suffer from fevers because Marianne reminds him of his tragic first love. However, Mrs. Dashwood, even upon learning her mistake in encouraging Marianne to dwell on the perfections of Willoughby without restraint, quickly romanticizes Marianne's possible marriage to Brandon. She is able to do so because his confession of love comes in relation to Marianne's illness and, in an Austen novel, illness tells the story of love. She tells Elinor that Col. Brandon,

"giving way to irresistible feelings, made me acquainted with his earnest, tender, constant, affection for Marianne. He has loved her, my Elinor, ever since the first moment of seeing her."

Here, however, Elinor perceived, -- not the language, not the professions of Colonel Brandon, but the natural embellishments of her mother's active fancy, which fashioned every thing delightful to her, as it chose. (295)

Brandon's love for Marianne is seen as a good match neither because he has a noble soul nor because he has had a constant affection for Marianne that cannot be altered by position or money, but because of the romantic manner of its declaration to her. The very impropriety of revealing one's love near the sickbed of one's lover and distracting attention from the one who requires aid is what makes the admission valuable to Mrs. Dashwood. Brandon has had constant admiration for Marianne, but Mrs. Dashwood can pretend that it is the sickness that has made his feelings, and thus Marianne, irresistible to him—as the illness made the telling of his feelings irresistible. Thwarted love may result in sickness, but recovery from her cold will result in love for Marianne. Mrs. Dashwood's ability to rewrite and romanticize Brandon is a sign that Marianne will be able to do so as well.

After establishing participation in lovesickness as the cornerstone to a heroine's identity, Austen closes her novel with a satire of both male and female lovesickness. In the conclusion of the novel, Austen has no compunction about mocking her characters' imperviousness to lovesickness's physical symptoms. To illuminate the absurdity of love killing off her heroes, she plays with the tendency of Edward's family to be lovesick. Mrs. Ferrars'

family had of late been extremely fluctuating. For many years of her life she had had two sons; but the crime and annihilation of Edward a few weeks ago, had robbed her of one; the similar annihilation of Robert had left her for a fortnight without any; and now, by the resuscitation of Edward, she had one again.

In spite of his being allowed once more to live, however, he did not feel the continuance of his existence secure, till he had revealed his present engagement; for the publication of that circumstance, he feared, might give a sudden turn to his constitution, and carry him off as rapidly as before. (328)

Love seems to cause male death in Edward's family's disapproval and extinction of him. No reader would seriously fear for Edward's health, however. Austen laughs that choices in love might effect Edward's constitution, where she earlier felt that she needed to embed painstaking proof that Marianne's illness is of environmental cause to prove that the female body does not break just this easily.

And even the roguish Willoughby, who rode a full day to be assured of Marianne's recovery and his own misery at his continued separation from her, is treated lightheartedly at the end of the novel. Austen uses him to continue her castigation of literary ideals of love and lovesickness. We read that the thought

that he was for ever inconsolable, that he fled from society, or contracted an habitual gloom of temper, or died of a broken heart, must not be depended on – for he did neither. He lived to exert, and frequently to

enjoy himself. His wife was not always out of humour, nor his home always uncomfortable; and in his breed of horses and dogs, and in sporting of every kind, he found no inconsiderable degree of domestic felicity. (334)

Austen's narrator destroys the romantic ideals of lovesickness at the end of the novel, refusing to let the reader romanticize characters' fates and refusing to let characters romanticize themselves. She ends her novel with a determined, mundane status quo. This is a sedate and calm end to a novel that contained equal instruction and emotion and that earlier allowed characters to write their own destinies or the destinies of others in participation with the literary lovesickness tradition.

Even Marianne's susceptibility to lovesickness is mocked in the closing lines of the novel:

Instead of falling sacrifice to an irresistible passion, as once she had fondly flattered herself with expecting, -- instead of remaining even for ever with her mother, and finding her only pleasures in retirement and study, as afterwards in her more calm and sober judgment she had determined on, -- she found herself at nineteen, submitting to new attachments, entering on new duties, placed in a new home, a wife, the mistress of a family, and the patroness of a village. (333)

Considering lovesickness's central role in the life of Marianne, the narrator's polite mocking of her ability to recover from it is brave. Austen's point is not that girls should beware love and the untrustworthy men who will claim their affections, break their

hearts, and cause their illnesses, but that the female body is tied to the female mind through more than emotion. A woman has a need to control her own identity formation. She should understand lovesickness as a technology of the self and should be made aware of the multiplicity of social codes around her before she is taught to submit to any one fashionable, but limiting social code. Austen models the power of writing one's own identity as she thwarts her characters' participation in the final relaying of their own stories. She reveals that women must take control of their own stories or, like the heroines of this novel, their passion will be silenced by the social text of duty and familial love.

CHAPTER III

PERPETUALLY LOVESICK: THE SOCIAL BENEFIT OF DISPLACED LOVESICKNESS

In *Emma* and *Sense and Sensibility*, Jane Austen writes a symptomatic love. Emma Woodhouse's self-analytical catalogue of her symptoms after Frank Churchill's departure and Marianne Dashwood's presentation of the symptoms of ill health for her family after Willoughby's departure are examples of a love that is diagnosable through symptoms of lovesickness that appear when a loved one is lost. In *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen also presents thwarted female love as a condition that is experienced by a woman who understands herself to be a part of a cultural love story that is of great interest to those around her. Austen establishes lovesickness as the bodily experience of a woman who is thwarted in love, grounded in culturally pervasive assumptions about female attachment to a lover, and whose body reacts to emotional trauma and displays its emotional state. Austen's lovesick woman chooses to reveal or to conceal symptoms associated with a broken heart according to the social expectations she sees as most proper or most advantageous to her. The lovesick heroine is in danger of dying from lovesickness only if the heroine's desire to enact the symptoms of lovesickness amounts to her embracing a lack of self-care (like Marianne Dashwood's walks in the rain) that causes her to fall ill with a sickness that is unrelated physically but is related socially to lovesickness.

Elizabeth Gaskell also includes literary lovesickness in her 1853 novel *Ruth*. In this novel, a young, orphaned, working-class seamstress apprentice named Ruth Hilton

is seduced by a young, handsome, leisure-class man named Mr. Bellingham, who abandons her just before Ruth discovers she is pregnant. Ruth's strong emotional attachment to Mr. Bellingham produces an indeterminate yet life-threatening illness that becomes dormant upon Ruth hearing that she is with child. Gaskell's version of lovesickness is the bodily experience that occurs in conjunction with love or an erotic relationship. Unlike Austen, who establishes lovesickness as a heroine's choice, Gaskell establishes lovesickness as a woman's unavoidable and spontaneous bodily response to the loss of love. Gaskell's heroine is not necessarily aware of others' interest in love stories or in her. She is not embracing lack of self-care as a sign to others that she needs care; she does not care for herself because she is unable to provide a means of saving herself. Because Gaskell's version of lovesickness is a good woman's necessary bodily response to thwarted love, she establishes lovesick women as deserving of care. That understanding of lovesickness allows Gaskell's novels to perform Victorian social work. Her novels provide a moral common ground between the sometimes harsh, but proper middle-class woman and the clearly improper, working-class, fallen woman.

Love and Health

In the first scenes, Ruth exhibits a feminine refinement revealed in her predisposition to sicken in response to emotional scenarios.²¹ A healthy Ruth, who enjoys a run on a cold, winter night, is introduced in relation to a fellow seamstress apprentice named Jenny, who is distinguished from the other apprentices by her kindness, her cough, and a pain in her side. While the consumptive Jenny is often cold,

Ruth is contrasted to her by a temperature that is warm from activity or from her dreams of her old home. Ruth cries “in her sleep as if her heart would break” (9), and Jenny awakens her, asserting that Ruth is only “feverish with sitting up late” (10), but Ruth, who awakes “pushing back the masses of hair that were heating her forehead” (9) and dreaming of her mother’s presence, is not feeling ill because of the late hours she spends sewing. Ruth’s sympathetic somatic response to the grief of her mother’s death is a type of orphan lovesickness. Though perfectly healthy, she gets feverish when she dreams of her dead mother, which foreshadows her future illness over the loss of the man she loves.

Ruth has inherited from both of her parents a tendency to sicken. Her mother, who has “delicate health” (32), dies when Ruth is twelve years old. Ruth’s mother is “the daughter of a poor curate” (32), early orphaned, and depicted as marrying down in class and up in wealth; she is “thankful to marry a respectable farmer” (32). After Mr. and Mrs. Hilton are married, Mrs. Hilton falls “into a delicate state of health” (32), and this poor health leaves her unable to help on the farm and has the neighbors labeling her “a delicate, fine lady” (32). Diane Price Herndl categorizes the common nineteenth-century figure of the invalid as a woman of leisure, and she notes that working-class women are not portrayed as invalids in literature (16). Mrs. Hilton’s being an invalid and being unable to work about the farm earns her the disdain of her working-class neighbors and the label of “fine lady.” However, Gaskell leaves the impression that Mrs. Hilton is a woman who is remarkably kind and gentle, her invalidism rendering her the family counselor: “her strong sense and lively faculty of hope upheld him [her husband] from

despair; her sympathy was always ready, and the invalid's room had an atmosphere of peace and encouragement, which affected all who entered it" (32). Yoko Hatano notes, "Evangelicals considered frailty and debility as a privilege that confers on the individual 'a moral authority and saintliness of manner'" (641). Instead of reading Mrs. Hilton as a failure of a farmer's wife, the reader partially accepts that Mrs. Hilton is innately of a higher class and valuable to her family for her refined emotions. After Mrs. Hilton's death, Ruth's father's "bodily health appeared as good as ever" (33), but he slowly diminishes and then dies from grief for his much-loved wife. Along with her parents who made an unsuccessful, working-class farmer and wife, Ruth sickens and requires care from others, affiliating Ruth with a tradition of lovesickness not typically seen in her station. Ruth is elevated above a working-class identity by her tendency to sicken in response to emotional scenarios, just as her mother's invalidism elevates her above the identity of her neighbors. Gaskell's creation of a working-class, lovesick girl confuses the Victorian understanding of class and women's ability to sicken.

Ruth may have inherited a predisposition to sicken from her mother and to sicken at the loss of love from her father; however, she is a country girl, depicted as healthier than the rest of the seamstress apprentices, who have been too long confined indoors. Her health and identity are not seriously threatened until after she falls in love and is abandoned by her lover. Gaskell writes Ruth as initially unaware that she is romantically interested in Mr. Bellingham, but she writes Mr. Bellingham as aware of his attraction to Ruth. Ruth's consistently poor but modest clothes set off her beauty better than the gaudy clothes of the girls from higher classes because they signify a powerlessness that

Mr. Bellingham finds appealing in a love relationship.²² Bellingham first sees Ruth at a party where she is working to repair tears in the middle-class girls' dresses at the most important event of the season. Waiting for Miss Duncombe, his dancing partner, to have her dress fixed by Ruth, Bellingham notices and is attracted to the vulnerability seen in Ruth's beauty contrasted with her shabby black dress: "his attention had been thereby drawn to consider the kneeling figure, that, habited in black up to the throat, with the noble head bent down to the occupation in which she was engaged, formed such a contrast to the flippancy, bright, artificial girl, who sat to be served with an air as haughty as a queen on her throne" (15). Mr. Bellingham is attracted by the contrast of a "noble" head on a kneeling figure with an "artificial" girl in a queenly pose.

Bellingham senses Ruth's innate refinement, but he is not only attracted to Ruth because of her contrast with Miss Duncombe. Ruth's "noble" head, which implies her place in a higher class, is also contrasted with her own black dress and engaged hands that mark her as orphaned and working class. A marriage with a girl from his own class like Miss Duncombe, who cares only for her power and attractiveness, would be a union of position and money: only a sophisticate could read in it the language of love.

Bellingham is attracted to a girl who would be indebted to him for her social mobility. He could have an expectation of devotion from a working-class girl, whose actual physical well-being would be determined by him. Bellingham longs for a girl capable of being lovesick: girl with no power, no friends, no one to coerce him to be good to her, a girl who would naturally be so dependent upon him that she would sicken if he left her. Inequitable power relations are an attractive foundation for the type of love that leads to

lovesickness in this Gaskell text. Bellingham has the power to enjoy Ruth as a luxury, while Ruth's life, well-being, and identity depend upon his treatment of her.

Ruth's refined emotions are further revealed at the rescue of Tom Brownson from the river. She sees a boy get swept away in a river, rushes in to try to save him, and succeeds only in getting a good view of a man on horseback rushing past her. Mr. Bellingham rides his horse into the river and grabs the boy, putting himself in no real danger. Ruth is in the water, "dizzy and sick with emotion" (20), watching the pseudo-heroic rescue of young Tom and believing that Bellingham is willing to risk his life for a working-class child. Ruth sees an act that she believes reveals Bellingham's innate goodness. Bellingham and Ruth get Tom to his grandmother's house, where Mr. Bellingham again notices Ruth's beauty, gives her money to see after the boy, and sets up a meeting with her for Sunday on her way to church where he will supposedly want to hear about Tom's recovery and about how Ruth has spent the money he gives for Tom's care.

Ruth's powerlessness in the ways of love is underscored by Gaskell's presentation of her as entirely innocent. Gregory asserts that "[w]hen a girl ceases to blush, she has lost the most powerful charm of her beauty" (26-7). The innocent girl's blush is beautiful because it is read as a sign of modesty and sexual interest at the same time.²³ The woman who loses the power to express her sexual interest through her blushing cheeks, loses the power to present herself as the type of woman to whom the Victorian man was attracted. Ruth does not have the power of the blush. Ruth's innocence and sexual purity are confirmed by her lack of blushing when Mr. Bellingham

gives her a camellia for her quick mending of Miss Duncombe's dress. The narrator details an attachment well before Ruth is aware of it: "She believed it was solely on the account of its exquisite beauty that she tended it [the camellia] so carefully. She told Jenny every particular of its presentation, with open, straight-looking eye, and without the deepening shade of colour" (17).²⁴ The narrator emphasizes that Ruth is "innocent and snow-pure" (39). Ruth's lack of blushing is a sign that she is so innocent she is incapable of knowing why she should blush in any encounter with the opposite sex. Ruth is prior to her first blush, which reveals her to be without "the most powerful charm of her beauty" – not because she has lost it, but because she has never found it. Ruth is unarmed in a battle of the sexes.

Ruth is without the awareness that would make her blush and make that blush powerful, but she does have an awareness that gauges impropriety. Marianne Dashwood, in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, is not concerned with her conduct because she knows that she would be sensible of any wrong act she made – she would feel it. Marianne is reacting to the ideology in conduct novels that define young women as possessing innate senses of right and wrong; however, the Marianne who understands social norms and flouts them to do what she feels is right discovers that her understanding of propriety is fallible after almost dying because she enacts a lovesickness based on lack of self-care. Gaskell pens a very different heroine who is not only aware of wrongdoing or sin, but also of impropriety. Ruth questions her own innocent behavior after she takes an afternoon walk with Bellingham.

‘How strange it is,’ she thought that evening, ‘that I should feel as if this charming afternoon’s walk were, somehow, not exactly wrong, but yet as if it were not right. Why can it be? I am not defrauding Mrs Mason of any of her time; that I know would be wrong; I am left to go where I like on Sundays. I have been to church, so it can’t be because I have missed doing my duty. If I had gone on this walk with Jenny, I wonder whether I should have felt as I do now. There must be something wrong in me, myself, to feel so guilty when I have done nothing which is not right.’

(36)

Ruth is able to determine by natural insight that her behavior may be questionable. She is able to reason out the elements in her walk that are not improper, and she is even able to determine that it is her companion that makes her question her propriety, for she would not feel guilty had she walked with Jenny. Ruth can sense that something is wrong, yet her lack of training means that her innate sense of what is proper will not match social expectation. Unlike Austen’s Marianne, who knowingly rejects restrictive social mores, Gaskell’s Ruth is outside social discourses of propriety because she has no mother and is working-class,²⁵ making her a potential outcast and setting her up to be without aid if she were to need it.

The ability to sicken in response to emotional turmoil is not what attracts Bellingham to Ruth, as he admires her useful, working hands and bent, subservient posture, but Ruth’s tendency to sicken when emotional is what enables a middle-class man to run off with her. Mrs. Mason catches Ruth near sunset, walking alone with

Bellingham. That night Mrs. Mason ends Ruth's apprenticeship and casts her off, and Ruth is "left standing there, stony, sick, and pale" (47). Social disapproval in the termination of her home and work with Mrs. Mason causes Ruth to realize with certainty that she has done wrong. In her fear and sorrow, "[i]t seemed to the poor child as if Mrs. Mason's words were irrevocable, and that, being so, she was shut out from every house. She saw how much she had done that was deserving of blame, now when it was too late to undo it" (48). The importance of the conduct book tradition in this novel is an underlying expectation that if one flouts social mores, one will pay for it. Joseph Litvak asserts that Austen's novels are education through intimidation (15), and Gaskell is using the threats inherent in ideologies of propriety to create a lovesickness that is inevitable and chastening, even as the lovesickness is also pitiable. The conduct book tradition relies upon an assumption of a woman's inability to reclaim or renew her good character after even an unintentional breach of propriety. Ruth collapses, and it is partially because of her physical collapse that Mr. Bellingham both begins to take care of her and is able to run away with her almost without her knowing it. Ruth's fall is the result of being outside society, sickening, and needing care and a place to belong. She does not fall for position or finery; she falls for place and protection.

Bellingham begins to redefine himself and Ruth as he sees the potential of their story becoming a romance. He stresses to Ruth that she is alone and without hope of care from Mrs. Mason or her guardian. Ruth knows that, with the loss of Mrs. Mason's protection, she has also lost the protection of her guardian, who begrudges her a warm shawl in the winter. Then, Bellingham redefines himself in relation to Ruth with a very

vague phrase of relationship: “I, who might be able to befriend you – through my mother, perhaps” (50). Bellingham makes a promise based upon outdated roles of rich men taking care of poor dependents. He promises Ruth the place of a dependent in his and his mother’s care (50). Ruth is too naïve to understand that as a working-class girl, she is not entitled to the kind of protection that would bring her into their family and allow for future marriage. Pam Parker acknowledges that “[w]hen Ruth goes to London with Bellingham, it is not because she is economically ambitious or morally depraved, but because she needs protection after Mrs Mason dismisses her. . . . Bellingham’s villainy comes in his eager exploitation of his paternal privileges” (56). Ruth is weak and without protection and even the narrator breaks into the text in this moment to exclaim, “Remember how young and innocent, and motherless she was! It seemed to her as if it would be happiness enough to be with him; and as for the future, he would arrange and decide for that” (49). That Bellingham “might” be able to help her and might do so “perhaps” legitimately through his mother’s protection is a poor possibility, but it is Ruth’s only offer. He begs her to say that “we are together, come what may” (50), and Ruth enters an unequal romance, answering Bellingham’s request to let him protect her with one word; “[l]ow and soft, with much hesitation, came the ‘Yes’; the fatal word of which she so little imagined the infinite consequences” (50). Indeed, this word is what ties love with sickness in this novel. This “yes” ties love and sin. This acquiescence to love at any price and Gaskell’s use of the word “fatal” incorporate the literary tradition of lovesickness within a Christian context of death as the reckoning for one’s sins.

Ruth makes her “fatal” decision to become a fallen woman out of a sincere anxiety about where she will live and how she will provide for herself. Ruth’s fall occurs because of her desire for Bellingham coupled with a natural desire to live comfortably. However, even with the obvious temptation to let Bellingham take care of her and with her inappropriate initial agreement to Bellingham’s plan, Ruth’s plan upon entering Bellingham’s carriage is not to run away with him. Ruth has changed her mind while waiting for him to fetch the carriage. She asks Bellingham to take her to her former family home to join her father’s old servants, “sir, I want you to take me to Milham Grange” (53). Bellingham assures Ruth, “if you will go to Milham, you must go in the carriage” (53). Ruth enters the carriage, but then they “drove towards London” (53). Brian Crick points out that neither Ruth’s fall nor even a real decision to fall is depicted in the novel. Crick notes that “it is inevitable that the reader wonders what transpires off-stage in Bellingham’s carriage. . . . Without this knowledge the moral significance of Ruth’s behaviour remains incomprehensible” (94). Nineteenth-century social response to the fallen woman is almost entirely prejudicial, making the story of the actual seduction unnecessary. What for Bellingham passes as “youthful follies” is condemned in a woman without any possible self-defense. Whether Ruth is abducted or agrees to run away with Bellingham is never clear, but Gaskell insists upon treating Ruth as if she has agreed, as if she has knowingly gambled that she will have a brighter future in the illegitimate protection of Bellingham than in the home of her old servants.

The next chapter begins with Ruth and Bellingham’s time in Wales, and it details Ruth’s very good health and good spirits. Gaskell’s contemporary critics found

distressing Ruth's innocent, peaceful, oneness with nature and happiness with herself, if not with Bellingham, in this period of illicit love in Wales. The narrator records that Ruth and Bellingham "settled down to a week's enjoyment of that Alpine country. It was most true enjoyment to Ruth" (56). The "beauty and grandeur" (56) of the mountains caused her to be "almost overpowered by the vague and solemn delight; but by and by her love of them equalled her awe" (56). A. J. Shelston argues that Ruth's very sexual nature is shown "when we see her living with her lover in North Wales, and positively enjoying the experience" (183). Ruth derives great pleasure from nature, revealing her behaviors and attitudes more than Bellingham's. In this happy retreat, Bellingham sleeps late, but Ruth is "up betimes, and out and away, brushing the dewdrops from the short crisp grass" (56). In her "light, rapid passings to and fro" (61), she is noticed by other hotel guests. A woman resents her presence at their lodgings, but her husband replies defensively that Ruth is lovely and that she is "[v]ery modest and innocent-looking in her white gown!" (61). Pam Parker notes that "Gaskell's initial representation of Ruth as a beautiful, gentle and inoffensive child challenges the notion that fallen women present a dangerous threat to the well-being of society" (57). Her appearance and demeanor are not in keeping with a modest young woman in distressed and wicked circumstances. Gaskell establishes the idea that love is healthy for a woman without power.

Lovesickness and Powerlessness

The happy, healthy, innocent Ruth of the Welsh passages contrasts with the guilt-ridden, fallen woman the reader expects to see until the narrator records some private

moments between the young couple. One day, Bellingham resents Ruth's naïve enjoyment of the rain and chastens her, saying "for the last two hours you have said nothing more amusing or interesting than – 'Oh, how beautiful!' or, 'There's another cloud coming across Moel Wynn'" (56). Ruth's "admiration [of nature] and her content made him angry, until her pretty motions and loving eyes soothed down his impatience" (56). Ruth is powerless to avoid provoking Bellingham's anger because she does not understand his middle-class lifestyle, and she is powerless to be angry at Bellingham's unfair attitude towards her because she is dependent upon him. In this scene Ruth is taught her lack of value, wishes "she had the gift of being amusing" (57), and wonders, "What could she say to interest Mr Bellingham?" (57). Ruth complies with his desire to play cards and lets him teach her a new game:

But Ruth was stupid, not so good as a dummy, he said; and it was no fun betting against himself. So the cards were flung across the table – on the floor – anywhere. Ruth picked them up. As she rose, she sighed a little with the depression of spirits consequent upon her own want of power to amuse and occupy him she loved. (57)

Bellingham expresses his power and his value through his verbal abuse and through a temper tantrum. He knows Ruth will not leave him because Ruth loves him and because as a fallen woman she has no acceptable place to go. Ruth displays her lack of power and her lack of value by subsuming her desires to his whims and by subsuming her sense of self to his valuation. Bellingham flings the cards, and she picks them up. He calls her stupid, and Ruth acknowledges her lack of commodifiable value. She cannot entertain

him, and he values amusements, so she must at least put up with his insults and try to serve him. This relationship that is unequal in power and unequal in love is the type of love story that will end in lovesickness in a Gaskell novel.

Ruth learns how to devalue herself and how to value Bellingham through her continued interaction with him, but she learns about social expectation as she discovers that she is different from other women. Dorothy McGavran points out that “Ruth is a non-self, not socially aware” (44). When Ruth is out walking one day, she spies the son and daughter of the man who thought she looked pretty and innocent in her white dress, walking with their nurse. These children have heard their mother’s disdainful conversation with their father, and when Ruth attempts to kiss the baby, the boy Harry strikes Ruth in the face and exclaims in defense of his violence, “She’s not a lady! ... She’s a bad, naughty girl – mamma said so, she did; and she sha’n’t kiss our baby!” (61). This moment profoundly changes Ruth’s understanding of her own identity. McGavran notes that it is after the little boy strikes her in Wales that “Ruth has become a social being as the words break through her dense, childlike awareness” (44). While Harry is imposing a specific Christian moral value on the fallen Ruth, the narrator makes clear that Ruth’s awakening at Harry’s touch has less to do with her soul than with her social position. McGavran states that Ruth “has no idea that she has done anything sinful or wrong” (44). However, Ruth does think a “new idea” (62) after the child’s insult. She cannot “put into words the sense she was just beginning to entertain of the estimation in which she was henceforward to be held” (62). McGavran rightly points to this moment as the one in which Ruth becomes a social being, not awakened here to the wrongness of

her choices or behavior, but awakened to the idea of others' judgment of her behavior and the effect of that judgment upon her social position.

Ruth learns that the social position of the woman in a love story unequal in love and social status is not enviable; she is not valued by Bellingham, and she is considered dangerous by those in legitimate families. Ruth does not speak to anyone of her encounter with the little boy who calls her a "naughty girl" (62). Realizing what her new social role will be, she is careful to hide that position from Bellingham. The narrator tells us that "[s]he thought he would be as much grieved as she was at what had taken place that morning; she fancied she should sink in his opinion if she told him how others regarded her; besides, it seemed ungenerous to dilate upon the suffering of which he was the cause" (62). The narrator attributes Ruth's silence about her depressed spirits to several causes.²⁶ Ruth assumes that Bellingham will be grieved, and she does not desire to make him sad because she has learned that her role is to amuse him. She also believes that she will sink in his opinion – that Bellingham will be affected by the opinions of others and that her value will decrease in his eyes. In addition, Ruth is concerned with being seen as ungenerous, even when she is legitimately unhappy in the mountain-house. Her learned role as Bellingham's comforter and source of amusement does not allow Ruth to open up and create a real dialogue about her self, her place, or even her relationship to him. Brian Crick applauds the realism with which Gaskell describes that in this relationship "the sadistic calculations of a villainous aristocrat preying on a tender-hearted and weak-minded social inferior are superseded by the intelligent examination of the failure of a human relationship" (96). While Crick astutely points out

the failure to communicate that mars this relationship even in its happiest moments, he is downplaying the role of class and money in this couple's ability to communicate.

Bellingham is a sophisticate in this relationship. He never intends to marry Ruth and never intends to care for her permanently, yet Ruth is trapped by her "fatal yes" to please him as long as she is able and by her material circumstances. She has no power. She allows Bellingham's objectification of her because she longs for value in his eyes, sees that she has no socially recognizable innate value to bring to him, and assumes that she must make herself valuable to him through her good service.

This unequal love story maintains unequal power relations even in the happiest moments of their relationship. Perhaps Ruth and Bellingham's finest moment of compatibility is a nearly silent interchange in the woods. The narrator and the reader share a moment of voyeurism, watching the happy couple in a picture-perfect scene. Ruth sees water-lilies in an edenic, sylvan pond and desires them. Bellingham retrieves some for her:

When he came back he took off her bonnet, without speaking, and began to place his flowers in her hair. She was quite still while he arranged her coronet, looking up in his face with loving eyes, with a peaceful composure. She knew that he was pleased from his manner, which had the joyfulness of a child playing with a new toy, and she did not think twice of his occupation. It was pleasant to forget everything except his pleasure. (64)

This passage, which is presented in the context of a lush, green, sympathetic Nature, reveals a moment of mutual happiness on the part of Ruth and Bellingham. Ruth is completely passive in this scene; Bellingham takes off her bonnet without first asking permission and takes control of her person. Ruth feels love and peace, which is a needed hiatus from her worries about her ability to please Bellingham or about her new social position. As Bellingham reads Ruth's body as a beautiful canvas upon which he can create art, Ruth reads his pleasure and accepts her status as his "new toy" because it brings him happiness.

The end of Ruth and Bellingham's happy retreat and the first sign that loss of romantic love will affect Ruth physically as well as emotionally occurs when Bellingham admits to having a severe headache, falls asleep, and wakes briefly in a delirium. Ruth seeks aid for her lover, and the doctor pronounces this "a bad case," claiming that a "brain-fever has set in" (66). Ruth keeps watch by Bellingham's bed, shivering and rejecting breakfast in a "sick agony" (66). Ruth is ignorant of how to help Bellingham and displays a series of symptoms that are sympathetic to Bellingham's pain. This physical sympathy with the ill health of her lover foreshadows that while love is health to Ruth, the loss of love will result in her sickening. Ruth is without power to help Bellingham as long as she is under the influence of her own symptoms of ill health. Ruth desires to aid her lover and seeks guidance from the doctor, offering to provide constant medical attention and even to apply leeches. "[W]hite and trembling" (67), she meets the doctor and earns his respect; "her countenance and deportment showed that the occasion was calling out strength sufficient to meet it" (67). The doctor is confident of

Ruth's ability to nurse competently, but he writes to encourage Mrs. Bellingham to come and see her son as his case is distressing.

Gaskell's narrator catalogues Ruth's symptoms in a similar manner to the way Austen's narrators record the symptoms of heroines who experience loss of a loved one: inability to eat, inability to sleep, weeping, and a preoccupation with the self. However, Ruth has not yet lost her lover, and the narrator's cataloguing shows both how Ruth feels the symptoms of ill health and how Ruth fights against them for the sake of her lover. Although Ruth is greatly affected by the danger to her paramour, she

put away every thought of the past or future; everything that could unfit her for the duties of the present. Exceeding love supplied the place of experience. She never left the room after the first day; she forced herself to eat, because his service needed her strength. She did not indulge in any tears, because the weeping she longed for would make her less able to attend upon him. She watched, and waited, and prayed: prayed with an utter forgetfulness of self. (68)

Ruth is not encouraging her worry and grief with memories of their past moments of happiness or promises of the future because to do so would "unfit" her for the present. She is not weak from lack of food because Ruth forces herself to eat to be strong enough to nurse her lover. She does not have a headache from hours of crying because she is focusing her attention on Bellingham's needs, not on her own feelings. Finally, she is not self-centered, focusing on her own pain, but actively praying "with an utter forgetfulness of self." She succumbs to a social pressure here, not to feel ill, but to thwart the

symptoms of illness.²⁷ Ruth finds a value in her role as a nurse to Bellingham. She has failed in providing him with amusements, but she throws herself heart and soul into providing his care. Gaskell establishes that it is in Ruth's nature to sicken at the loss of love and also that Ruth can overcome the symptoms of lovesickness for the sake of her lover. If she were to lose Bellingham, Ruth would have no reason to fight a spontaneous physical sickening.

When Mrs. Bellingham's arrival necessitates Ruth's separation from Bellingham, for no proper lady would receive a fallen woman, Ruth loses her hard-won control over the physical ailments related to her fear of losing her lover. Once alone, "she felt her self-restraint suddenly give way, and burst into the saddest, most utterly wretched weeping she had ever known. She was worn out with watching, and exhausted by passionate crying, and she lay down on the bed and fell asleep" (69). Even after a deep sleep, Ruth is not recovered, and when she seeks information about Bellingham's health, the innkeeper Mrs. Morgan is affected by Ruth's appearance: "'Lord, child, you're never going to faint and be ill on my hands?' Her sharp voice recalled Ruth from the sick unconsciousness that had been creeping over her as she listened to the latter part of this speech. She sat down and could not speak – the room whirled round and round – her white feebleness touched Mrs. Morgan's heart" (70). Unable to take action to aid Bellingham, Ruth cannot maintain basic health or hide her ill health from others. Instead, Ruth's transparency wins the compassion of the servants at the inn and even earns her the care of the disagreeable Mrs. Morgan. Causing unpleasant people to desire to help

Ruth, Gaskell uses lovesickness as a technology of the self in order to shape Ruth's character as one who is worthy of care.

Ruth spends the night that is the turning point of Bellingham's fever in the hall outside his door, experiencing severe symptoms of ill health. She is crouched on the floor and, "her whole existence was absorbed in listening: all was still; it was only her heart beating with the strong, heavy, regular sound of a hammer. She wished she could stop its rushing, incessant clang" (71). Ruth's heart beating loudly in her own ears reveals a circulatory problem; she is distracted by her own somatic response to the possible loss of her lover. Ruth also has sympathy pains for Bellingham; "She heard a rustle of a silken gown, and knew it ought not to have been worn in a sick room; for her senses seemed to have passed into the keeping of the invalid, and to feel only as he felt" (71). Between seducing Ruth and then redefining their relationship, establishing Ruth as his comforter and entertainer, Bellingham solidifies Ruth's social self as valuable only in relationship with him. Ruth has learned to think of herself as an extension of Bellingham. Her senses are gone from her own use, and in sympathy, she "feel[s] only as he" does. In the moment of Bellingham's illness, Ruth does not exist for herself. With morning comes the conclusion of the crisis, and Ruth gives "a sigh of relief that the night was over and gone; for she knew that soon suspense would be ended, and the verdict known, whether for life or for death. She grew faint and sick with anxiety" (72). Mrs. Bellingham emerges from the room, and Ruth must fight her symptoms again to ask about her lover. Ruth's "very lips were stiff and unpliant with the force of the blood which rushed to her head. It seemed as if she could not form words" (72). After Mrs.

Bellingham tells Ruth that her son is better, Ruth thanks God, “sinking back against the wall” (73). Gaskell is carefully cataloguing the physical symptoms that Ruth undergoes to highlight that Ruth’s distress is neither pecuniary nor adolescent; Ruth experiences a spontaneous participation in literary lovesickness that ennobles her as it makes her an object of pity.

Ruth’s symptoms of ill health, caused by her love of and her worry for the health of the man she loves, is very different from Mr. Bellingham’s sickness. Gaskell is aware of the social codes embedded in physical illness by her presentation of sickness in relation to cultural duties and attitudes. Ruth suppresses her illness for the sake of others, never complaining about feeling ill and graciously accepting the scolding she receives from the innkeeper Mrs. Morgan for being unable to eat the tea that is brought to her and wasting buttered toast (70). The physical ailment that Ruth cannot overcome, even though she tries, brings her the aid of those around her; however, Bellingham experiences a very different sort of illness. Once he is no longer delirious and is out of danger, he begins exaggerating his symptoms to others. He manipulates the codes surrounding the treatment of the sick. The narrator notes, “[i]f Mr. Bellingham did not get rapidly well, it was more owing to the morbid querulous fancy attendant on great weakness than from any unfavorable medical symptom. But he turned away with peevish loathing from the very sight of food, prepared in the slovenly manner which had almost disgusted him when he was well” (74-5). Bellingham has nonspecific symptoms like Ruth does (weakness and no desire to eat), but he is not granted the sanction of the medical establishment. The narrator stresses that he doesn’t have enough “unfavorable

medical symptom[s]” to explain his lack of healing and ascribes his weakness to “fancy” and “peevish loathing” of his food. Mr. Bellingham exhibits behaviors that are not consistent with his illness but with his class snobbishness. The display of Bellingham’s illness controls those caring for him. Gaskell is aware that sickness is a social tool. Visible symptoms of ill health gain characters care, but Gaskell attaches a moral judgment to the way one experiences that care: Ruth does not demand control and is considerate while Bellingham controls those around him and is peevish.

Gaskell describes Ruth’s attitude after Bellingham’s recovery as incredibly patient. Mrs. Bellingham does not wish to see Ruth again, and Ruth complies without question. She is no longer concerned at all about Bellingham because of “the faithful trustfulness of her heart. Ruth believes that if Mr. Bellingham was alive and likely to live, all was well” (73). She has no concern about the nature of her relationship with Bellingham because she believes that once “he wanted her, he would send for her, ask for her, yearn for her, till everyone would yield before his steadfast will. At present she imagined that he was probably too weak to care or know who was about him; and thought it would have been an infinite delight to her to hover and brood around him, yet it was of him she thought and not of herself” (73). Ruth subsumes her desire to see and nurse Bellingham to her desire to be pleasing to him and his mother. She believes that Bellingham loves her.

While Ruth consistently loses value by her association with Mr. Bellingham, from the moment that Mrs. Mason sees her with him when she loses her apprenticeship through the moment that he abandons her, Mr. Bellingham does try to assign her some

value as he argues with his mother over her character. After doing all that he can to destroy her social value, Bellingham attempts to alleviate a little of the damage by accepting the blame for Ruth's fall:

“Ruth is no improper character, mother; you do her injustice!”

“My dear boy, you don't mean to uphold her as a paragon of virtue!”

“No, mother, but I led her wrong; I—“ (75)

Bellingham's defense of Ruth and acceptance of blame for Ruth's fall is admirable. Even when his virtuous Victorian mother defines Ruth as brazen and disdainful of virtue, Bellingham refutes this categorization of Ruth, acknowledging that she is “neither impudent nor hardened; she [i]s ignorant enough, and might offend from knowing no better” (76). After his affair with Ruth, Bellingham does not see her as a corrupting influence, but as a woman in need of education. He posits that her main social offense is ignorance of society's ways, not a lack of heart or lack of desire to do right.

One of the reasons that Bellingham has a difficult time defending Ruth to his mother is the strength of the cultural assumption that a woman falls swiftly and completely into corruption through sexual sin and is only ever an agent of corruption from that point on.²⁸ Another reason that Bellingham is unable to defend Ruth is because of his mother's anger that she deflects onto Ruth because she dare not direct it towards Bellingham. Mrs. Bellingham does not understand her son's defense of a loose woman and only understands that her son is ready for the affair to end with as little embarrassment or discomfort to himself as possible. That Bellingham admits he has

injured an innocent Ruth's social standing yet has no qualms about abandoning her shows how selfish a character he really is. Gaskell is able to underscore that the Victorian middle class could be aware of harm it perpetrated on the working class without feeling responsibility or desiring to alleviate the damage. Mrs. Bellingham redeems her son from his obligations to Ruth with fifty pounds and a cool note and considers him free, sharing the innkeeper's attitude that the use of a certain denigrating tone is the only way to have a proper interchange with fallen women. The lack of a face-to-face interview, the scathing note, and fifty pounds all free her and her son socially from their responsibilities as they deny Ruth a social value and put instead an actual monetary value on her lost virtue.

Ruth's faith in Bellingham is misplaced. Mr. Bellingham agrees to leave the hotel without seeing Ruth again and is whisked away by his mother in secret. Ruth receives the letter from Mrs. Bellingham, informing her of their departure, and runs on foot after the carriage. The narrator reveals that "[a]s she ran she prayed with wild eagerness; she prayed that she might see his face once more, even if she died on the spot before him. It was one of those prayers which God is too merciful to grant; but, despairing and wild as it was, Ruth put her soul into it, and prayed it again, and yet again" (79). Wild is an interesting word to use here and has a few meanings that seem relevant to a study of lovesickness. First of all, wild implies that Ruth is in a natural state. Being wild, she is not sophisticated. She is not thinking out her behavior to make it socially acceptable but is in touch with a wild nature or instinct. As Ruth is consistently in a sympathetic relationship to nature, her spontaneous actions are

underscored by her collapsing on wild, Welsh moorland. Ruth is also wild in the sense that she is no longer in captivity. She has been a kept woman, and she is now free, but it is a freedom that she does not relish. Fear of this freedom pushed her into Mr. Bellingham's arms in the first place. She cannot value this freedom because she does not know how to value herself in it. She has accepted Bellingham's devaluation of her person until she sees herself as nothing but a cipher, who needs him by her side to have value. Finally, wild also relates to passion. Ruth is a woman driven by her emotional impulses, no longer rationally deciding what behavior to enact.

Passionate wildness is related to female madness. Simpson, Mrs. Bellingham's favorite maid, recalls that Ruth "rushed out like mad" (90) to try to catch them as they left. However, Ruth's wildness does not make her animalistic and base. Ruth's emotions reveal her to be less animalistic because in the one thought of her wild madness, she prays a "wild" and natural prayer. While the wild that is associated with passion in the novel can be depraved, ugly, hidden, or sinful like Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* or Hester Prynne's wild rendezvous in the woods with Arthur Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter*, Ruth is wild in a way that contains elements of passion and despair, and yet proves that she is innocent all at the same time. Ruth already feels cut off from society because of the little boy who strikes her and calls her a name, and that isolation is increased by her lover being whisked away without her being able to see him, but Gaskell reveals that her despair leads her to a state from which she naturally turns to God for help; she does not feel isolated from nature or from God.

Ruth's loss of her lover gives her a death wish. Unable to catch the Bellinghams's carriage, Ruth lies on the ground exhausted. She assumes that God's answer to her prayer will be a swift and inevitable death; "[h]er only hope was to die, and she believed she was dying" (81). Ruth has entered a self-centered phase of lovesickness in which, feeling only despair, she can care only about her own pain and can see no non-violent end to it. Ruth is in the posture of a degraded, fallen woman, and she is discovered in this broken-hearted condition by a visiting pastor, named Mr. Benson, whom she has seen a couple of times in her week in Wales. Mr. Benson comes across her after she misses the Bellingham's departing carriage.

There he saw the young girl whom he had noticed at first for her innocent beauty, and the second time for the idea he had gained respecting her situation: there he saw her, crouched up like some hunted creature, with a wild, scared look of despair, which almost made her lovely face seem fierce; he saw her dress soiled and dim, her bonnet crushed and battered with her tossings to and fro on the moorland bed; he saw the poor, lost wanderer, and when he saw her he had compassion on her. (81)

Here, Ruth resembles the mad Bertha Mason from *Jane Eyre* as much as a young, healthy girl, but even though Mr. Benson depicts Ruth as seeming "fierce," he labels her a "wanderer," not as something beneath his notice. Thinking of Pre-Raphaelite images of fallen women, Sophia Andres notes that "[b]y re-drawing such paintings in her narrative, Elizabeth Gaskell simultaneously attempts to revise literary history. Her narrative breaks the silence of stereotypical passive, submissive women and engages her readers

in questions regarding those women's individual experiences" (45). Benson looks at Ruth with a pity that is still able to touch her heart and prays words that strike a chord in her hurt psyche.

The lovesick Ruth can only be called out of wildness, self-pity, and despair by a relationship with another person. She feels as if she is dying, but her death is not quick enough for her. Ruth runs to the river to drown herself; however, her attempted suicide is thwarted by the cry of Mr. Benson, who falls in an attempt to stop the desperate Ruth's run to the water.

Ruth, speeding on in her despair, heard the sharp utterance, and stopped suddenly short. It did what no remonstrance could have done; it called her out of herself. The tender nature was in her still, in that hour when all good angels seemed to have abandoned her. In the old days she could never bear to hear or see bodily suffering in any of God's meanest creatures, without trying to succour them; and now, in her rush to the awful death of the suicide, she stayed her wild steps, and turned to find from whom that sharp sound of anguish had issued. (82)

Ruth has to be called out of herself and out her wildness to an awareness of others around her. Her isolation from others is so great that Mr. Benson's injury and her feeling of obligation to provide care for him is necessary for her to see herself again in a defining relationship – one that gives her a temporary reason to live. Mr. Benson is relieved that Ruth responds to his call for help because he has been worried "with an agony in his mind far keener than any bodily pain ... that by his unfortunate fall he had

lost all chance of saving her” (83).²⁹ However, Ruth is “awakened ... from her madness” (83), and “she had a consciousness that someone looked for her kind offices, that she was wanted in the world, and must not rush hastily out of it” (83). When Ruth and Mr. Benson make it back to his lodgings, Mrs. Hughes notices that Mr. Benson “looked very pale, but Ruth looked as if the shadow of death was upon her” (84). So, while Mr. Benson has sustained physical injury and Ruth merely emotional injury, Ruth looks more seriously ill.

After Ruth is deterred from suicide and safely back at lodgings for the night, Mr. Benson is still concerned for her health. Ruth’s emotional turmoil is described in the words of Nature’s turmoil; “[t]he storm was in her mind, and rent and tore her purposes into forms as wild and irregular as the heavenly shapes she was looking at” (85). Mr. Benson is concerned for Ruth because “[h]e saw her longing gaze outwards upon the free broad world, and thought that the syren waters, whose deadly music yet rang in his ears, were again tempting her” (85). The temptation to kill herself is still uppermost in Ruth’s thoughts. Her longing for death is based on her heart’s thwarted desires and her inability to re-imagine her social self. Even Mr. Benson no longer needs her help once they are back at his lodging. As she cannot conceive of anyone wanting her, Mr. Benson finds that “his words did not vibrate in her atmosphere. The storm-spirit raged there, and filled her heart with the thought that she was an outcast” (85). If a woman’s value comes from those who love her, then Ruth’s abandonment causes her to have no social worth. Her social self is jeopardized when her learned identity as Mr. Bellingham’s comforter and entertainer is gone. This loss of identity is fully experienced in the

delirium surrounding the feverish, emotional break with reality that Ruth next experiences.

Ruth realizes her resultant loss of status from kept woman to unprotected fallen woman through a complicated (though, Gaskell stresses, natural) participation in the literary lovesickness tradition. What other authors manifest most dramatically in fever, Gaskell manifests in a deadly calm and wasting away after a moment of wildness. Ruth's feverishness brings moments of "wildness" or "madness" out of her delirium. Female madness expresses simultaneously low, carnal desires and a higher sense of the breaking of refined sensibilities that is the tragedy of madness: the beauty and delicacy of what was in conjunction with the ugliness and coarseness of what is. Gaskell seems particularly drawn to a depiction of lovesickness that is both wild and refined. While it contains the remnants of the eighteenth-century literary figure of Sterne's Maria and Shakespeare's sixteenth-century Ophelia, who retain their purity and their beauty while losing their minds forever, Gaskell's lovesickness is very physical with intense emotional, psychological, and spiritual consequences.

Mr. Benson's sickness and Ruth's sickness in Wales are contrasted as Gaskell distinguishes Ruth's emotional and physical condition from the sickness of another character. Mr. Benson is in Wales for an annual trip for his health. He is an invalid, and he is too weak to sustain the trauma of Ruth's attempted suicide without a need for recovery. Mr. Benson "could not sleep; and, as in fever, the coming events kept unrolling themselves before him in every changing and fantastic form" (86). Mr. Benson has spiritual, emotional, and physical unrest and near-delirium as presented in a

fever. Ruth has imprinted the wildness and fever that she experienced on the moor onto the invalid who seeks to help her. Ruth, on the other hand, ceases to present the sickness of fever once she is at Mr. Benson's lodgings. She promises not to leave Mr. Benson till the morning, and with that promise her condition alters. Ruth feels "a great blank in her heart. She had given up her chance. She was calm, in the utter absence of all hope" (85). Once Ruth gives up her chance to commit suicide, she is not out of physical danger. Indeed, she still passes through a dangerous illness, diagnosable by a physician, and separate from a fever. We first hear of it from the caretaker of the lodgings where Mr. Benson vacations, Mrs. Hughes, who tells Mr. Benson that Ruth is "quiet-like, sir; but I think that she is dying" (86). Ruth is described as

lay[ing] as if she were dead, her eyes shut, her wan face numbed into a fixed anguish of expression. She did not speak when they spoke, though after a while they thought she strove to do so. But all power of motion and utterance had left her. ... Mr Benson lifted up her arm to feel her feeble, fluttering pulse; and when he let go her hand, it fell upon the bed in a dull, heavy way, as if she were already dead. (86-7)

Ruth's lack of sophistication is important because it proves her lovesickness to be spontaneous. Unlike Austen's Marianne, who endangers her own life in a rote following of the social codes set up for women in love in novels, Ruth is not well-read. She has had no education about men, women, their relations, and the inevitable decline of the lady at the loss of her love. Thus, Gaskell sets up lovesickness as an actual disease with

physical symptoms that naturally occurs with any girl who loves and who has been jilted.

Mrs. Hughes and Mr. Benson attempt to use many home remedies to comfort Ruth. Mrs. Hughes has offered Ruth her best food. Ruth wants only water, but she drinks milk so that Mrs. Hughes will not think her cross (87). Aside from food, Ruth's caretakers also undress her, open the window to let in air, and put hot water bottles on her feet when they are cold. Even with all the care that he gives her, Mr. Benson is forced to describe Ruth's illness to his sister as "[p]retty nearly as quiet as if she were dead. She does not speak, or move, or even sigh" (95). Later, Ruth is protected from direct sunlight; "Mrs. Hughes had pinned up a piece of green calico, by way of a Venetian blind, to shut out the afternoon sun; and in the light thus shaded lay Ruth – still, and wan, and white" (96). Thus far, the lovesickness affecting Ruth has non-specific symptoms, yet it is still physical in nature, and Mrs. Hughes and Mr. Benson call the doctor for further support. This lovesickness is a very calm, quiet, weakness, recognized to be too serious for home remedies alone.

Ruth's condition calls for aid, requires nursing, wins the hearts of those who provide care, and blesses those who give that aid. The narrator reveals, "[i]t was a proof of the true love, which was the nature of both [Mr. Benson and Mrs. Hughes] that it never crossed their minds to regret that this poor young creature had been thus thrown upon their hands. On the contrary, Mrs Hughes called it 'a blessing,'" realizing that "[i]t blesseth him that gives, and him that takes." (87). Ruth shows very little change in symptoms over night; "she was as one stunned into unconsciousness; she did not move

her posture, she hardly breathed. From time to time Mrs Hughes wetted her mouth with some liquid, and there was a little mechanical motion of the lips; that was the only sign of life she gave” (89). When the doctor comes, he shakes “his head – ‘a thorough prostration of strength, occasioned by some great shock on the nerves’ – and prescribed care and quiet, and mysterious medicines, but acknowledged that the result was doubtful, very doubtful” (89-90). Indeed, the doctor gives validity to Ruth’s illness, and the medical establishment substantiates the danger of lovesickness. However, Gaskell makes sure to maintain the association of Ruth’s illness with literary lovesickness by emphasizing the “mysterious” medicines instead of providing a specific prescription from a page in a medical handbook that would define the ailment.³⁰ The doctor returns later and still “insists upon quiet; he orders medicines and strong broth” (97). Reinforcing that his original opinion is not inaccurate, the doctor’s later assessment confirms that Ruth is still sick enough to need medicine and to be unable to eat solid food. Ruth’s lovesickness renders her helpless, sympathetic, and at the mercy of others to provide her the care that the medical establishment sanctions as necessary.

Lovesickness and the Fallen Woman’s Identity

When Ruth gets in the carriage with Bellingham after Mrs. Mason casts her off, she is not socially aware enough to know that her living with Bellingham will lead to a much more constricting economic future and to a more constricting identity for herself than returning to Mrs. Mason’s or going to Milham Grange. That Bellingham means to fulfill the promise of his mother’s protection of Ruth is not believable, but Ruth does

believe it. She does not understand that Bellingham lies to her until she receives Mrs. Bellingham's letter that ends her relationship with Bellingham. While Mrs. Bellingham acknowledges an obligation to "protect" Ruth after her discovery of her son in Wales, Mrs. Bellingham considers her obligation to be purely financial. After Mrs. Bellingham hears her son admit his guilt in the affair, she writes to Ruth, exhorting her to "turn to an honest life, and I strongly recommend you, if indeed you are not 'dead in trespasses and sin', to enter some penitentiary" (78). Ruth, the fallen woman, is cast as a siren who entraps innocent men and who is more than likely a hardened offender of God's will, unable to turn from sinfulness. Ruth's social identity is fully compromised in that fatal "yes," the social sin of becoming a fallen woman.

As a fallen woman, Ruth is considered socially contagious by many of her middle and upper class contemporaries in the novel, who are not hopeful of her reform. Mrs. Bellingham writes to Mr. Benson that "she proposes to procure her [Ruth] admission into the Fordham Penitentiary, the best place for such a character, as by this profligate action she has forfeited the only friend remaining to her in the world" (92). Mrs. Bellingham sees a need for social action in this scenario, but assuming the hardened nature of the fallen woman and knowing that Mrs. Mason's aid is impossible, Mrs. Bellingham relies upon and suggests the social institution set up for fallen women.³¹ But for Ruth's emotional needs, this solution might have provided the end of a short novel. Ruth falls because of dire economic circumstances, but she also falls because of a love and desire for a handsome young man who lies about their future. Ruth needs help for the heart as well as the body. She is given only three choices for her

future: a life as a kept woman, a life as a prostitute if she is “dead in trespasses and sin,” or a life in a Magdalen house if she is not. Even Mr. Benson sees Ruth somewhat stereotypically as he worries about her future, “I have been dreading lest, as she recovered consciousness, there should be a return of her despair. I have been thinking of every holy word, every promise to the penitent – of the tenderness which led the Magdalen aright” (101). Not just Mrs. Bellingham, but even Mr. Benson, who cares for Ruth and hopes to enable a successful reform of her, assumes that her sin leads her on a progression that ends in inevitable prostitution, comparing her in his mind to “the Magdalen.”

Miss Benson, Mr. Benson’s sister who travels to Wales to assist her brother with Ruth’s care, has a similar initial reaction to Ruth. When she hears the story that her brother tells her of a young, fallen woman in need of care, she is skeptical at best. Her reluctance to have anything to do with the girl is only exceeded by her desire for her brother to have nothing else to do with her. She seems afraid of what proximity to the fallen Ruth will do to her brother’s reputation. However, her expectations of moral and physical contagion in the sickroom are quickly altered; “such death-like quietness startled Miss Benson – startled her into pity for the poor lovely creature who lay thus stricken and felled. When she saw her, she could no longer imagine her to be an imposter, or a hardened sinner; such prostration of woe belonged to neither” (96-7). Gaskell’s description of Ruth as “stricken and felled” is rhetorically powerful and changes our understanding of how the fallen woman comes to fall. She changes the metaphor of the fallen woman from an active woman who falls from virtue and grace to

a more violent image of a passive woman who sustains a blow that ends in her collapse. Changing the image of the fallen woman from active sin to passive hurt allows a hard-nosed, proper, Victorian Miss Benson to be in the room and to take over the care of the young Ruth. Indeed, on her first evening in Wales, Miss Benson “reign[s] sole power and potentate in Ruth’s little chamber. Nothing could have been better devised for giving her an interest in the invalid. The very dependence of one so helpless upon her care incline[s] her heart towards her” (98). Unlike Marianne Dashwood who is morally suspect because of her appropriation of lovesick symptoms to get attention at the expense of her sister Elinor, who also needs care but is denied it, Ruth’s spontaneous illnesses are all associated with positive feminine qualities: weakness and dependence.

While Mrs. Bellingham does not consider reform likely, she does use the language of reform in her letter about Ruth to Mr. Benson. Mrs. Bellingham acknowledges only institutional reform, the “penitentiary,” while Mr. Benson also thinks of religious community, “holy word[s]” combined with “tenderness.” That Ruth might not even need reform is unimaginable to both Mrs. Bellingham and Mr. Benson. The idea that Ruth could marry Mr. Bellingham is also not considered by either of her temporary “protectors” as an option. In fact, Mrs. Bellingham does not think she owes more than a one-time gift of fifty pounds to Ruth’s well-being and reform. While Deirdre D’Albertis asserts, “William Acton’s broad (and unforgiving) interpretation of the word ‘prostitute’ could extend to any ‘female who, whether for hire or not voluntarily surrenders her virtue’” (75),³² Mrs. Bellingham’s payment to Ruth is the first real symbol of prostitution related to Ruth, and Ruth does not accept the money or the

symbolism. Ruth tells Miss Benson that the “money pains my heart. He has left off loving me, and has gone away. This money seems – oh, Miss Benson – it seems as if he could comfort me, for being forsaken, by money.’ And at that word the tears, so long kept back and repressed, forced their way like rain” (107). Ruth understands the message behind the money left for her, and she is justifiably offended. She may have originally fallen for love as well as a need for protection and shelter, but she returns the Bellinghams’ money and proves that a woman who falls for love and protection does not rate economic needs above her need for an identity set apart from “prostitute.” Ruth’s rejection of the fifty pounds may be impractical, but Gaskell writes her as being above such practicality because her lovesickness will establish her identity, her immediate care, and her future support.

Gaskell makes literary lovesickness a technology of the self that provides her with an opportunity to establish a fallen woman as a being in need of emotional and physical care. Gaskell refuses to acknowledge that Mrs. Bellingham’s generosity (she could have left nothing for Ruth) is an appropriate reading of Ruth’s value. Ruth’s refusal of the insult and the label behind Mrs. Bellingham’s offered money establishes that Ruth’s need of “comfort” is a dramatic difference from the kept woman’s need of “comforts.” Ruth’s lovesickness affords her a status that every fallen woman would not be granted. Her lovesickness garners her protection and a place because it proves her legitimate need for both—sickness requires aid. Ruth’s physical ailment makes her more suitable for a hospital than a penitentiary and also reveals the callousness of the initial social reaction to her predicament. Before she meets Ruth, Miss Benson is timid

and afraid of having contact with a fallen woman, but she immediately recognizes by Ruth's need of care that she is not "an impostor" or "a hardened sinner" (96-7), and Miss Benson is not afraid of a heart-broken invalid as she would be an unrepentant, sinful woman. As Ruth begins to recover, Miss Benson recognizes that she "was rallying fast, though rallying to a consciousness of sorrow, as was evinced by the tears which came slowly rolling down her pale sad cheeks – tears which she had not the power to wipe away" (98-9). A major part of Ruth's worth throughout the rest of Gaskell's text is associated with the value of a sinner. Where Mrs. Bellingham saw corruption and hardness, the Bensons recognize hurt.

Lovesickness earns the fallen woman a higher status by affording her the privilege of association with a different class of women. The class of women that she is first associated with in Wales, where Mr. Benson is saddened at the sight of her in the midst of her illicit happiness and where the little boy, Harry, strikes her as a member of the class of "naughty girls," is different from the class of women with whom she is associated because her heart is broken by a man who jilts her. Suddenly, Ruth is placed in a literary association with Shakespeare's Ophelia, Sterne's Maria, and Tennyson's Elaine and Lady of Shalott. Lovesickness lends Ruth the innocence of these great white-clad virgins, who inevitably go mad or die from the losses they sustain.

Ruth's Lovesickness Becomes Dormant

Ruth is in danger of dying from the lovesickness that she contracts after Bellingham deserts her, until she has a change of heart. Her initial fever subsides with

her promise not to kill herself, but the non-responsive wasting away that occurs after the fever subsides is more dangerous to her than the initial fever. The doctor comes again to see Ruth, and Miss Benson reports to her brother, “something so shocking has just been discovered – I don’t know how to word it – she will have a child. The doctor says so” (100). Miss Benson is disgusted by the news the doctor gives to her about Ruth’s pregnancy. Her disgust is centered around Ruth’s reaction to her pregnancy, which is one of gratitude; Ruth “did not seem to understand how it ought to be viewed, but took it just as if she had a right to have a baby. She said, “Oh, my God, I thank thee! Oh, I will be so good!” (100). Ruth has a deep and untroubled happiness for the first time in the novel. She is looking forward to a baby being dependent upon her for happiness, as she was dependent upon Mrs. Mason and then on Mr. Bellingham for hers. She wishes both to live and to change her behavior, to “be so good,” for the sake of her child.

Miss Benson discusses the change in Ruth with her brother, and Mr. Benson is much more pleased with the news than is his sister. The narrator stresses that the possibility of Ruth’s being pregnant had never previously entered Mr. Benson’s mind. While he is waiting for his sister to tell him what is wrong, the narrator stresses, “[a]ll things possible and impossible crossed his mind, but the right one. I said, ‘all things possible’, I made a mistake. He never believed Ruth to be more guilty than she seemed” (99). Mr. Benson seems to have believed that Ruth was not having sexual relations with Mr. Bellingham, and that her white dress and innocent happiness connoted female sexual purity. Realizing that his thoughts about Ruth’s innocence are wrong, Mr. Benson characterizes Ruth’s previous life as he would that of any fallen woman. A woman who

falls is considered selfish, as is a woman who is lovesick. A baby's dependency is something that Mr. Benson sees as a potential cure for Ruth's focus on herself; "it draws her out of herself! If her life has hitherto been self-seeking and wickedly thoughtless, here is the instrument to make her forget herself, and be thoughtful for another" (101). This selfishness that needs to be cured is also sinful. Mr. Benson sees Ruth's baby as a possibility for her redemption, "Teach her (and God will teach her, if man does not come between) to reverence her child; and this reverence will shut out sin – will be purification" (101). Mr. Benson's desire to help Ruth to distance herself from her selfishness is akin to Austen's Mrs. Dashwood, who desires to "cheat" Marianne from her own valuable focus on herself. Ruth's baby has already awakened her from a focus on herself, and being a mother will provide her a new social role. Thus, Mr. Benson believes that the child will be the basis of Ruth's social redemption as well.

Ruth's change in health is simultaneous with this shift in her attitude and shift in her life's focus. Gaskell leaves much of Ruth's medical condition intentionally vague, but, like Austen's Marianne, Ruth is in partial control of her recovery. She begins to heal for the sake of her unborn child. The narrator states, "She checked herself, however, in the violence of her emotion, for she thought of her child" (107). Just as Ruth fought the symptoms of ill health for the ailing Bellingham's sake, so to does she fight illness for the sake of her child. H. Abelain notes that "la place de l'enfant, dans le rachat et dans la réhabilitation de la mère, est primordiale, ce qui constitue une nouveauté par rapport aux écrits antérieurs: loin d'être une marque d'infamie pour la mère, l'enfant devient pour elle un motif d'espérer" (111).³³ An illegitimate child, which is spoken of

with distaste by Miss Benson, is the root of hope and salvation to this mother. As a fallen woman, one who is already discussed in terms of prostitution and whose only real avenue for reform is in a state-run penitentiary, Ruth has no desire to live and no real hope of recovery to her own text. Once Ruth has a reason to live, a new social role of mother to her child, she begins to heal at a more rapid rate. Sophia Andres notes many similarities between Ruth's physical descriptions and mannerisms and several Pre-Raphaelite paintings of the Virgin Mary; "[b]y associating Ruth with the Virgin Mary, Gaskell defies, subverts, and elides the conventional distinction between the binary Victorian gender oppositions: the virgin and the fallen woman" (49). Even though it takes Ruth a while to understand her situation, her lovesickness and recovery from it for the sake of her child grant her a protective mantle, a proof of the purification of her heart that both enables and requires that the Bensons value her as an equal and as a repentant sinner and grant her a place in society from which she can grow in strength, faith, and understanding of her individual worth to God and those around her.

The Bensons treat Ruth as a person in recovery, but Gaskell's narrator insists that Ruth's lovesickness is merely dormant, not cured. Miss Benson keeps Ruth's comfort a priority in her thoughts for their transportation out of Wales and, she "desired the spare-room might be prepared, and made every provision she could think of for Ruth's comfort; for Ruth still remained feeble and weak" (111). Ruth is recovering, but her recovery is as vague as her illness. "Feeble and weak" does not express much in the way of symptoms, but it implies that Ruth is no longer physically ill. However, she continues to exhibit the symptoms of a heartbroken girl, who misses the object of her affection.

One day, she is busy making a black dress to wear in her new life as the widowed Mrs. Denbigh, the supposed relative of the Bensons, but

when nothing remained, but to rest for the next day's journey – Ruth could not sit still. She wandered from window to window, learning off each rock and tree by heart. Each had its tale, which it was agony to remember; but which it would have been worse agony to forget. The sound of running waters she heard that quiet evening was in her ears as she lay on her death-bed; so well had she learnt their tune. (111)

She is restless and feels pain at the sight of the place where she lived with Bellingham, but she is somehow also enjoying this agony as if to forget that the moments of happiness before her abandonment would be worse. In this way, Ruth is like Marianne Dashwood, who constantly reminds herself of the places she spent time with Willoughby in order to refresh the pain she felt at his loss. Ruth chooses not to forget these moments in which she has value to her lover as his comforter and his plaything. Even though she is cast aside and emptied of social value because of her association with him, Ruth has integrated this love relationship into her permanent identity. Gaskell foreshadows Ruth's death in this passage and acknowledges that Ruth will never truly be "over" this love. She will go to her death hearing the sound of running waters, the sound of her love that is equally the sound of her loss. The narrator captures Ruth in a frame of love and loss out of which she cannot step. We will see the Bensons, Sally, and Ruth herself attempt to sidestep this narrative and rewrite Ruth's life as the widow of a young

surgeon and a mother, but Gaskell has already incorporated her into a narrative that is inexorably rigid – the narrative of spontaneous lovesickness.

As Ruth heals from her initial near-death participation in lovesickness, she tries to hide the continual conflict in her spirit and body from those who care about her as she begins a new life:

And now all was over. She had driven in to Llan-dhu, sitting by her lover's side, living in the bright present, and strangely forgetful of the past or the future; she had dreamed out her dream, and she had awakened from the vision of love. She walked slowly and sadly down the long hill, her tears fast falling, but as quickly wiped away; while she strove to make steady the low quivering voice which was often called upon to answer some remark of Miss Benson's. (111)

The narrator describes Ruth's love affair as a dream and describes her being forsaken as awakening from the vision of love. Ruth's love, merely a "dream," is simply a matter of wish fulfillment. Ruth desires, loves, and trusts Bellingham, yet Ruth allows herself to be carried away with love because of her powerlessness: the social problem of being a single girl with no money, no protection, and no parental guidance. While Gaskell does not undervalue the severity of Ruth's broken heart, she does acknowledge that a good proportion of a woman's experience of love is tied together with the need to establish her identity and discover a place for herself. A woman's inability to value herself causes her to accept an identity that is perhaps nothing more than an illusion or an extension of her

own desires, living the “present” and “forgetful” of the larger vision of herself that includes who she has been and who she will be.

Lovesickness and Power

Ruth is not the only character in Gaskell’s novel who experiences lovesickness. After Ruth has been taken in by the Benson family, she meets a woman who has been lovesick and has had a very different experience with physical illness and love. The Bensons’ faithful servant, Sally, tells Ruth her own love story one night to help her fall asleep. Sally, who is rough, uncultured, and solidly working class, actually has a participation in lovesickness that is as sophisticated as Austen’s Marianne Dashwood’s. She wishes for a suitor, just so she can say she’s been asked to marry someone, and that wish is granted. Mr. Dixon asks Sally formally on his knees to be his wife “week after next” (143), and she refuses politely. He mentions his four-room house, furniture and income. Then he asks again, mentioning that he must be married before Christmas because he plans to kill a pig at that time. After the third refusal, angry and red-faced, Dixon tells her he will give her until the next day to change her mind. However, her suitor is so ugly and bad-tempered that she rejects him without a qualm, saying, “My first thoughts, second thoughts, and third thoughts is all one and the same; you’ve but tempted me once, and that was when you spoke of your pig. But of yoursel’ your nothing to boast on, and so I’ll bid you good night” (143). However, after Mr. Dixon leaves, she then begins to think of the song *Barbara Allen*, and her attitude changes dramatically.

After the proposal, Sally exhibits physical and emotional symptoms of lovesickness. Sally tells Ruth, “The master called me in to prayers, but I can’t say I could put my mind to them, for my heart was beating so. However, it was a comfort to have had an offer of holy matrimony; and though it flustered me, it made me think more of myself” (143). Her mind was diverted from her devotions by her somatic response to rejecting a suitor, coupled with a new sense of self-worth. Sally is as vulnerable as Marianne to the promises of power inherent in a lovesickness code. Her beating heart and her being flustered are signs that love relationships render her weak, and her thinking “more of [her]self” prompts three weeks of self-doubt about her possible misuse of that power. About the night of the proposal, Sally recounts:

I began to wonder if I’d not been cruel and hard to him. You see, I were feverish-like; and the old song of Barbary Allen would keep running in my head, and I thought I were Barbary, and he were young Jemmy Gray, and that maybe he’d die for love of me: and I pictured him to mysel’, lying on his death-bed, with his face turned to the wall, “wi’ deadly sorrow sighing”, and I could ha’ pinched mysel’ for having been so like cruel Barbary Allen. (143)

Sally presents her listeners with a sophisticated reading of her relationship with Jerry Dixon that is re-interpreted through the language of and consequences represented in a popular ballad. She feels as if she has a fever, and she cannot stop thinking of her suitor; however, she thinks of him in the person of the ballad’s Jemmy Gray, not in the person of Mr. Dixon. She imagines him in the postures and suffering of a folk hero, unable to

move on with his life without her. She imagines a Jerry Dixon who is prone to male lovesickness. Sally feels the weight of this lovesickness, placing the guilt for the lost life of a rejected man squarely on her shoulders. Dixon's imagined death causes Sally to label herself "cruel" and to desire to cause herself physical pain in penance for the pain she causes Dixon.

For weeks Sally endures the guilt, sorrow, and responsibility of killing a worthy suitor, even though she was forced to manufacture the worthy suitor in her own mind.

And when I got up the next day, I found it hard to think on the real Jerry Dixon I had seen the night before, apart from the sad and sorrowful Jerry I thought on a-dying, when I were between sleeping and waking. And for many a day I turned sick, when I heard the passing bell, for I thought it were the bell loud-knelling which were to break my heart wi' a sense of what I'd missed in saying "No" to Jerry, and so killing him with cruelty.

(143)

Again, Sally experiences bodily symptoms at the thought of causing a man emotional pain, "turn[ing] sick" at the thought of Jerry's death. Sally's pain is a physical participation in the imagined emotional pain of a suitor's rejection, but it is also part of a much more complicated emotional response to this scenario. Sally's participation in the lovesickness tradition of falling physically ill in response to failed suit is a way of re-imagining herself. She is revising her proposal from one in which her suitor knows that she "may never have such a chance again" (142) into a moment of romantic, literary love. Working-class Sally is sophisticated enough to rewrite the mythology of true love

and its consequences into the story of her life and the production of her identity. Her lovesickness is much less a matter of feeling sorry for Jerry Dixon than it is wishing that she could feel sorry for him. Knowing that this is her one chance for romantic interchange with a suitor causes her to recode her very prosaic proposal into the stuff of songs. For if Jerry dies with his face to the wall, then she will experience the proposal the way she really wanted it in the first place. Jerry will have proven his love for her, and she will regret her ill treatment of the man who loved her. Her heart would then be able to break (as it is not now) because she'd be forced to acknowledge her lover's sincerity and her own sacrifice for the sake of Master Thurston. Sally is attracted to the idea of having a broken heart for the same reason that she is attracted to the idea of receiving a legitimate proposal; a broken heart may be painful, but it is the proof to herself and others that she has loved and has been loved.

The sophistication of Sally's participation in lovesickness is also seen in her instantaneous return to full health.

But in less than a three week, I heard parish bells a-ringing merrily for a wedding; and in the course of the morning, someone says to me, "Hark! how the bells is ringing for Jerry Dixon's wedding!" And, all on a sudden, he changed back again from a heart-broken young fellow, like Jemmy Gray, into a stout, middle-aged man, ruddy complexioned, with a wart on his left cheek like life! (143)

Sally experiences a mild lovesickness with non-specific symptoms for three weeks until her broken-hearted suitor marries someone else. The bells that Sally has coded with the

message of Jerry Dixon's death end up revealing his successful attachment to another woman. The revelation that neither Jerry Dixon's health nor happiness are in jeopardy at Sally's rejection re-orient the previous order of things. Sally knows "all on a sudden" that Jerry does not love her and that she neither loves nor is attracted to him. While she has received the proposal she always wanted, it was not the stuff of fairy tales or popular ballads, even though she seems to be aware that her response to the proposal has been, which is her sophistication.

Gaskell writes of this working-class woman finding herself falling prey to symptoms of lovesickness when she doesn't even like the man she rejects. She is filled with self-doubt about her ability to make a valid choice for herself and is unable to stand by the judgments she has previously made about the appearance and character of her suitor. Literature, folk songs, and popular culture teach young ladies and working-class girls alike not to trust their instincts and not to feel that they can truly measure a man. These same sources tell a young lady that she will face the anxiety of a love relationship with a certain set of specific, psycho-somatic symptoms. Even working-class Sally is in tune enough with popular ballads that she brings those symptoms to fruition on her body in a sophisticated participation in the lovesickness tradition. This literary lovesickness tradition causes women to doubt their ability to make the right decisions for themselves and calls for women to sicken in payment for a modicum of control over their lives, a control Gaskell asserts that women from all classes equally desire.

This episode, while very funny, proves that Gaskell, like Jane Austen, knows the power of suggestion and the power of literary culture on female health and behavior in

nineteenth-century England. Sally's experience with lovesickness can also be contrasted with Ruth's illness. Sally uses lovesickness as a technology of the self to produce a version of herself that is the recipient of true love. Ruth experiences a spontaneous lovesickness. Sally is socially aware, while Ruth is not. Sally has a place in relationship to the Bensons; she is their servant, and as a woman who feels responsible for Mr. Benson's deformed back, she is a woman who is fully devoted to living in his home and caring for him. Sally is in touch with popular culture, while Ruth is not. Sally knows and is interested in the cultural love story projected onto all women. Like Austen's Emma Woodhouse, Sally is a woman who desires a proposal, but not a relationship, and is willing to fantasize an exciting proposal for herself. Ruth is not fantasizing her feelings about Mr. Bellingham. Ruth loves. Ruth desires death and would bring it at her own hand rather than live without him. Ruth lives, but lives through sickness and continues in a weakened state. Gaskell's narrator makes repeated reference to Ruth in some relation to death, including right after Sally's story. The narrator tells us that Sally looked and saw that "there lay Ruth, peaceful as death, with her baby on her breast" (144). Sally knowingly participates in a culture of lovesickness, but Gaskell contrasts her sophistication with Ruth's spontaneous participation.

Instead of a system in which ladies are bought and sold in marriage and pretend that their relationships are all for love, Gaskell shows that the natural place for lovesickness is with the powerless and poor. Sally, though working class, is neither powerless nor poor in the context of her story. She is well provided for by the Bensons and has a home with them; she encounters her proposal from the perspective of a woman

who knows she will reject her suitor. As a strong, working woman, Sally is a commodity to Jerry Dixon with value in the services she provides, and Dixon translates his value into goods to entice her acceptance. Ruth's relationship with Bellingham also has strong economic motivations, but a spontaneous participation in lovesickness – a participation from which one does not heal oneself – develops from an inequitable degree of sophistication, value and power. Of course Ruth falls in love with and gives herself to Mr. Bellingham because he offers to care for her if she returns his love, and she has nothing else to give. Part of the problem with a lack of sophistication is that Ruth is unaware that she can code herself with value, which means she can only accept the valuation of others, and her self-image and health are affected by that value. Ruth will cheat death for a while, only to be trapped eventually by her love for Mr. Bellingham at a later date. Ruth's pregnancy allows her lovesickness to be dormant and allows her to postpone her death, which is the ultimate end of spontaneous literary lovesickness. Ruth does not participate in the lovesickness tradition in a sophisticated manipulation of signs to the world around her. This difference between Marianne Dashwood and Ruth or even between Sally and Ruth will prove the purity of her heart by lovesickness's inevitable destruction of her body.

Religion and the Displacement of Ruth's Love

The Victorian social strictures surrounding female sexual sin were so rigid that there is no doubt in the other characters' minds of Ruth's offense or of her probable future. Gaskell makes Ruth a unique Victorian fallen woman by giving her a status as

“sinner” as opposed to “lost.” The distinction is subtle, but telling. The lost are portrayed in several Victorian paintings. The woman in Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s “Found” is beautiful, pathetic, and an image of a Victorian pariah. Rossetti painted a prostitute, ashamed of herself and unable to avoid being seen by her former love; the painting is beautiful, the situation ugly. Andres states, “If we consider that the Pre-Raphaelites deliberately chose to create what contemporary critics saw as ‘grotesque’ and ‘ugly’ representations of gender constructs in a culture that upheld the belief that *‘the most beautiful soul must have the most beautiful body,’* we may then realize the extent of their remarkable contribution to the extension of gendered boundaries” (43). The Pre-Raphaelites confuse the category of lost women by making them the beautiful focal points of their paintings and by bringing the lost before polite Victorian society.

Pre-Raphaelite images, which Gaskell both admired and understood to be a convincing method of critiquing Victorian ideology, influenced her representation of Ruth.³⁴ Gaskell refuses to present an image of a beautiful woman at the moment of the discovery of her sin and then allow that woman to remain lost to society. Gaskell writes Ruth as a dynamic character even after her fall. Ruth is unlike Gaskell’s Esther in *Mary Barton*, who is a static representation of the fallen woman, lost to respectable society and merely a shadow of her former good looks. Esther cannot associate with her niece Mary, even to give her advice. She can only pawn her finery to borrow the clothes of a working-class woman, pretending to have the social position she used to have in order to gain temporary access to her family. Esther goes to great lengths to advise her niece, but the novel ends without a thought of her reformation or reintroduction to respectable

society. Mariana Valverde asserts that Victorians believed many women fell into prostitution for access to clothes and finery that they could not otherwise wear. As Valverde notes, “If clothes make the fallen woman, then they also make the honest woman. This is the hidden anxiety behind Gaskell’s discourse on clothes: she overtly decried working girls’ tendency to dress up in ‘artificials’ and other signifiers of a vice they had not yet fallen into, but a covert and perhaps deeper worry was that fallen women would perform the opposite operation and masquerade as virtuous wives of workingmen” (172). In *Ruth*, Gaskell writes a dynamic, young, beautiful, and naïve fallen woman, who dons widows robes and does not merely pretend to be but actually becomes a loving, virtuous mother to her son and a good role model for young girls as well.

The sinner, not the lost, is the heroine of Gaskell’s novel. The Pre-Raphaelites took the image of the fallen woman and re-imagined her in the context of the tragedy of the loss of the domestic angel. They re-imagined her beauty as that which would enable her to garner sympathy from those who saw her, but, doing so, they only served to emphasize the fallen woman’s lostness. Hilary Schor writes, “If in *Mary Barton* Gaskell was attempting to create new forms of fiction, in *Ruth* she is taking on existing literary conventions and examining them for what they do and do not allow a woman writer to say about female experience, and for the ways in which they appropriate and manipulate women as aesthetic objects and subjects of literary plotting” (159). Unlike paintings that manifest only one possible posture for a fallen woman, Gaskell uses the nineteenth-century novel to reveal the moment when Ruth understands that she is lost and also to

show her slow transformation into a virtuous woman. When Gaskell writes of Ruth's fall, she acknowledges sin and the consequences of sin to the fallen woman, even as painted images of lostness do. Gaskell finds it appropriate, even after Charlotte Brontë begs for Ruth's life,³⁵ to have her heroine's post-fall narrative lead to her death, but equally important to Gaskell is that the narrative that leads to Ruth's death – the social redemption and the return to an active religious participation – is of greater significance than the necessary death. Gaskell incorporates Ruth into a tradition that classifies her as a sinner in a Unitarian framework. As Michael D. Wheeler notes, "no sinner is damned to everlasting punishment after death" (149), and "[a]s a Fallen Woman, Ruth is not damned, but prays to God for forgiveness, and earns the respect of the community in which she lives by her unselfish devotion to the sick and the poor" (149). Ruth is a sinner, and thus she is still a dynamic character.

At the doctor's pronouncement that she is pregnant, Ruth's initial fever and death wish give way to gratitude and a projection of herself into the future, "I will be so good," and the change that Ruth undergoes for her son also causes her to heal temporarily. Ruth gives birth to her son, Leonard, and she feels total happiness. Leonard's effect on his mother's physical and emotional health is good; the narrator records that "her darling, her individual baby, already, though not an hour old, separate and sole in her heart, strangely fill[s] up its measure with love and peace, and even hope" (136). Ruth's heart is full of love for her son, and love in a Gaskell novel equals health. Just as Ruth's love for Bellingham in Wales provides Ruth a vibrant health that allows her to ramble over mountain trails and with sleep untroubled by dreams of her dead mother, so does a baby

in her arms provide Ruth with health and her first emotional relief since Bellingham abandons her. Turning away from human love is not how Gaskell expects Ruth to do penance, and the narrator even stresses the strength of Ruth's love for Leonard, naming it "that early passion of maternal love" (136). Ruth's ability to feel love after Bellingham breaks her heart is a benefit to her.

All love is interdependent in the heart of the fallen woman that Gaskell pens. Love for Bellingham, Leonard, and God are all present in Ruth's thoughts and in her heart. As Ruth plans for the future after Leonard's birth, she makes a statement that frightens Miss Benson. Ruth tells the infant Leonard, "if I may but live, I will spend my life in serving you!" (137). To this, Miss Benson exclaims through tears, "And in serving God! ... You must not make him into an idol, or God will, perhaps, punish you through him" (137). Ruth believes that God understands her love for her son to be "natural" (137), but she "treasure[s] up the warning" (137) and is careful that love for her son not push love for God out of her heart. Before Leonard is weaned, Ruth also continues to daydream about Bellingham. One day Sally takes Leonard away from Ruth because Ruth is crying on Leonard's face, which Sally claims is bad luck. Ruth is sorry and says, "I did not know it brought ill-luck, or if my heart broke I would not have let a tear drop on his face – I never will again" (147). Ruth repents of imprinting her sorrow on her child's face; "she would kneel down by his little bed at night ... and tell God ... that she feared she loved her child too much, yet could not, would not, love him less; and speak to Him of her one treasure as she could speak to no earthly friend. And so, unconsciously, her love for her child led her up to love to God, to the All-knowing, who

read her heart” (176). Love is not separated into illicit and divine in this text. Instead, Gaskell shows how a woman’s capacity to love is the good quality out of which sin or virtue may equally arise.

Gaskell’s novel not only details Ruth’s post-fall story, but it details her social recovery from fallenness. Unlike Esther, Ruth is granted social redemption for her fall because of her ability to sicken. Ruth does not awaken from her fever with a new sense of her place and a full understanding of God’s love and her place in society; she wakes a very confused and despairing fallen woman. Her narrative unfolds to teach her how she is valued by those around her. Gaskell refuses to let Ruth be worth an amount of money. Not only does Ruth initially refuse Mrs. Bellingham’s fifty pounds and the insult connected to monetary compensation for her lost virtue, but throughout the rest of the novel Mr. Benson, Miss Benson, and Sally make clear to Ruth that her worth in their household is independent of her ability to support herself and her son in it. They continually underscore the value of the emotional connection they have made both with her and with her illegitimate son, pushing back the day when Ruth and Leonard will move out and be financially independent “as a favour to [Mr. Benson] – as a still greater favour to [Miss Benson]” (145). That Ruth is worth social redemption is seen by the Bensons’ love of her and by her receptivity to feeling divine love. While never condoning their choices, Gaskell accepts that fallen women are not lost to depravity and hardened feelings because love caused their fall in the first place. The propensity to sicken at the loss of love is Gaskell’s key to reveal their conversion from an improper to a proper life as well as to a proper relationship with God. Gaskell reads lovesickness as a

sign of morality. The ability of a woman to sicken at the loss of love is the gauge by which her heart is read and her cultural salvation both justified and assured.

Ruth reveals the state of her heart at her first visit to church. Roy and Dorothy Porter explain that the British experienced sickness as a calling to refocus on God (174). Gaskell uses lovesickness to emphasize the capacity of the fallen woman's soul to reach out and to refocus on God and social responsibility. Ruth's spontaneous sicknesses stem from her heart's true and deep need to be loved. The good minister's attempt not to preach at Ruth fails miserably:

He had Ruth present in his thoughts all the time he had been preparing for his Sunday duty; and he had tried carefully to eschew everything which she might feel as an allusion to her own case. He remembered how the Good Shepherd, in Poussin's beautiful picture, tenderly carried the lambs which had wearied themselves by going astray, and felt how like tenderness was required towards poor Ruth. (130)³⁶

The compassionate Mr. Benson wishes to make Ruth feel at ease and safe in her first visit to church. He avoids anything in his sermon that might make her feel that it is aimed at her. He makes this decision based on a message he gleans from a painting. Art that interprets the parable of the lost sheep, not the parable itself, causes him to treat Ruth with deeper tenderness. In like manner a devout Mrs. Gaskell chose to reach her Victorian audience not through a thoroughly researched scriptural treatise, but through the pages of her second novel. Gaskell was aware that the arts can humanize rigid social codes.

Mr. Benson does not preach about fallen women, and yet the narrator asks, “where is the chapter which does not contain something which a broken and contrite spirit may not apply itself?” (130). Gaskell both redefines the fallen woman from seductive temptress to “broken and contrite spirit” and reveals the fallen woman’s receptivity to God’s word. Broken, Ruth cannot be hardened in sinfulness; she represents a newly pliable surface that others besides Bellingham may imprint. The pliability that Gaskell partially blames for Ruth’s fall is the same quality that will allow her to be saved by Christian community. Ruth reacts physically to scripture that is read; “And so it fell out that, as he read, Ruth’s heart was smitten, and she sank down, and down, till she was kneeling on the floor of the pew, and speaking to God in the spirit, if not in the words, of the Prodigal Son: ‘Father! I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy child!’” (130). In Wales Ruth seems unaware of her distance from God, when she prays for and believes that God will let her die on the moor as Bellingham leaves her; however, Ruth now accepts that her actions have been sinful and acknowledges her separation from God. Just as Ruth manifests intense spiritual symptoms when she recognizes her distance from Bellingham and her inability to catch his departing carriage, she reproduces similar symptoms as she recognizes her spiritual distance from God.

The idea that Ruth would have to prove her salvation by rejecting the desire for which she falls seems appropriate (i.e. rejecting future love relationships); however, Gaskell actually patterns Ruth’s redemption on her finding a new lover. In the course of the book, Ruth finds many outlets for her love in those about her and in her son, and

she is troubled by persistent desires for Bellingham. However, Ruth's reform is not just behavioral or religious, it is an awakening to new love. Ruth's ability to sicken at the loss of love is an important instrument in the narrative of her repentance. Ruth's contrition is physically familiar. Ruth is first "smitten" in her heart. Then, she sinks "down, and down" into a kneeling attitude that is at the same time the attitude of supplication to one's God as well as one's lover. It is not her head that makes her aware of her guilt; it is her heart. Ruth is "smitten" in the heart – verbiage used to denote chastening, a physical blow, as well as the acknowledgment of a crush. Just as she falls to the ground on the Welsh moorlands in despair, Ruth sinks down into the humble posture of the lovesick woman, afraid of the distance between herself and her God.

The spontaneously lovesick woman has no pride, has no awareness of others, and is at the mercy of the care of others. Ruth exhibits those symptoms here as well:

Miss Benson was thankful (although she loved Ruth the better for this self-abandonment) that the minister's seat was far in the shade of the gallery. She tried to look attentive to her brother, in order that Mr Bradshaw might not suspect anything unusual, while she stealthily took hold of Ruth's passive hand, as it lay helpless on the cushion, and pressed it softly and tenderly. But Ruth sat on the ground, bowed down and crushed in her sorrow, till all was ended.

The narrator switches in the middle of an intensely important scene about Ruth to Miss Benson's perspective. This switch allows an outside observer to validate the spirit of the posturing that Ruth participates in. Miss Benson respects the "self-abandonment"

that Ruth exhibits, while being grateful that no one else will see it. In the same way that Elinor protects Marianne's lovesickness from the judgment of outsiders by hiding Marianne's participation in lovesickness with a screen of symptoms, so does Miss Benson shield Ruth from the curiosity of the congregation by her attentiveness to her brother's sermon.

Self-abandonment coupled with Miss Benson's critical eye measures Ruth's sincerity. When Ruth makes her "fatal yes" to Bellingham, she agrees to devote herself to him "come what may" (50). She does not realize that the kind of trusting self-abandonment that Bellingham asks of her is wrong because he is untrustworthy and because abandoning herself to Bellingham's care distances her from God. Just as self-abandonment with a lover is not wrong unless he is a rogue and "le[ads her] wrong" (75), self-abandonment with God and in the presence of a servant of God is good. Previously unaware that her sin separated her from God, Ruth exhibits the ultimate loving and trusting dependence on him now. Miss Benson witnesses Ruth's painful awakening to her situation and acknowledges Ruth's need of comfort and support by holding her hand. Ruth's hand is "passive" and "helpless," and Ruth is "bowed down and crushed in her sorrow."

Miss Benson loitered in her seat, divided between the consciousness that she, as *locum tenens* for the minister's wife, was expected to be at the door to receive the kind greetings of many after her absence from home, and her unwillingness to disturb Ruth, who was evidently praying, and,

by her quiet breathing, receiving grave and solemn influences into her soul. At length she rose up, calm and composed even to dignity. (130)

Mr. Benson's kind attempt not to preach of her sin and bow her down with guilt and grief is futile. Ruth feels the Biblical passages speak to her; she inwardly confesses her sins to God, and she repents. Mr. Benson's desire not to cause her to feel guilt and despair is irrelevant to how the God that Gaskell writes works. When a sinner feels her distance from God and acknowledges that her sin caused the distance, God ministers to the sinner (without the aid of a preacher or sermon) with "grave and solemn influences into her soul." Miss Benson's desire to comfort Ruth, and Ruth's eventual "dignity" prove that Ruth has finally found the right relationship in which to abandon herself.

Miss Benson's shielding Ruth from the view of the congregation castigates the church. Miss Benson was "thankful" that their pew is shaded by the gallery and even feigns interest in her brother's sermon so that Mr. Bradshaw will not "suspect anything unusual." If church is where sinners repent and the lost are found, it does seem odd that an act of true contrition would be seen as unusual in this congregation, while Miss Benson's deceptive pose of listening to the sermon fits in. Gaskell paints these good Christian folk with a brush that captures their hypocrisy. In contrast with the Poussin painting that causes Benson to think of Christian mercy and love, Gaskell reveals a congregation that would not wish to see the signs of a repentant soul because these signs simultaneously reveal the penitent's sin, which must be hidden from the church. Gaskell's reference to the story of the prodigal places the fallen woman who was commonly thought to be hardened and lost to every good feeling in the tradition of those

who repent and receive mercy. The story of the prodigal is one of social redemption. The prodigal son loses his social standing and then regains it after the chastening of a misspent life. The father in the story reinstates his son upon his return to the family. The son does not lose his place or his initial family value because he is wrong and sinful in his youth. The Prodigal's older brother is jealous, finding it difficult to accept the celebrations surrounding the Prodigal's homecoming. Gaskell has beautifully captured the hostility of the elder brother in Bradshaw and the church members, who must be shielded from the sight of the repentant fallen woman.

Ruth reveals not merely her lost love and her pain, but she also reveals her need for social redemption and reinstatement. The problem that Gaskell exposes in *Ruth* is not the problem of immorality, but the problem of a society that has socialized Christianity into a system that validates the treatment of lower class sinners as a caste of hardened rebels from God's will. Gaskell more than implies that the Victorian Christian attitude toward sin might be what hardens the sinner. Gaskell writes and re-envision a Victorian Christianity that gauges the goodness of the human heart before it casts off sinners to workhouses, penitentiaries, and poverty. Because Gaskell needed a key to reading the human heart that anyone could see, she appropriated the convention of literary lovesickness to establish a barometer of the soul. For Gaskell, lovesickness gauges the condition of the human heart, and Gaskell shows that through the illness that is the consequence of lost love, a fallen woman, instead of hardening of her godly nature and defying God, may be showing a propensity to love that is very much in line with God's plan. Gaskell was not writing a manifesto in favor of free love, but she was

writing deliberately to destroy the idea that a fallen woman is a source of corruption to others and is too hardened to accept the forgiveness of God. Gaskell does not entirely discount the notion that fallen women become prostitutes. The characters in her novel who accept this idea as natural are not written as being unjustified in their assumption; however, Gaskell places this continued fall into degradation and prostitution as a failure of society and economic security, not a fall by choice. Gaskell also disproves that this fall is inevitable, as some might have it. Ruth's ability to contract a lovesickness of the soul affirms to the Christian community that Ruth desires God.

Ruth's Recurrences of Lovesickness

Ruth becomes an angel in the Benson house, but she is tested in her newfound Christian understanding. Ruth doesn't just wear the guise of the widow and the proper governess and act the roles without a profound change in her person and conduct. Ruth is aware of the great changes she has made; "the strange change was in Ruth herself ... Life had become significant and full of duty to her" (161). Describing Ruth's emotional transformation, Retan notes, "The desire that Ruth suppresses in becoming the type of the domestic angel surfaces in images of nightmare and disease" (197). While the past does not disappear, the narrator notes that Ruth "strove to forget what had gone before this last twelve months. She shuddered up from contemplating it; it was like a bad, unholy dream" (161). Ruth is so different after a year in the Benson home that her life with Bellingham seems more dreamlike than reality. Although Ruth exhibits symptoms of divine lovesickness, proving her attachment to God, she is still occasionally subject to

the symptoms from her original human attachment as well. She tries not to think of her time spent with Bellingham, for “there was a strange yearning kind of love for the father of the child whom she pressed to her heart, which came, and she could not bid it begone as sinful, it was so pure and natural, even when thinking of it, as in the sight of God” (161). Ruth has a permanent connection to Bellingham in her son. As Leonard is innocent and a gift from God, Ruth’s love of God cannot cancel out the connection to or her longing for the man who gave her Leonard.

After Bellingham comes to Ecclestone as Mr. Donne, Ruth is unable to push him out of her mind, and she has serious recurrences of lovesickness for him. Years after her week in Wales, Ruth is a beautiful, young mother and a governess to the Bradshaw family, and she appears perfectly healthy. The narrator notes that

six or seven years ago, you would have perceived that she was not altogether a lady by birth and education, yet now she might have been placed among the highest in the land, and would have been taken by the most critical judge for their equal, although ignorant of their conventional etiquette – an ignorance which she would have acknowledged in a simple childlike way, being unconscious of any false shame. (176)

Ruth is now, after the experience of illicit love, lovesickness, and single motherhood, more socially acceptable than before her fall, when she was not aware of social mores. Gaskell teaches her audience here that experience does not deprave womanly innocence, but instead experience provides the motivation for and understanding of proper social

relations. Ruth is not forever subject to her ability to attract men for her keep. She is a part of the Bensons' home and a real part of the Bradshaws' lives. She circulates in the spiritual and economic centers of Eccleston and has discovered a value for herself outside of her sexual worth or Bellingham's commodification of her beauty.

Ruth does not have one week of sexual experience in Wales and then remain angelic and purged of desire for the remainder of the novel. She is in Abermouth with the youngest Bradshaw daughters when she meets Mr. Donne (an older Mr. Bellingham) on the beach. Although he looks different and has a new name, Ruth recognizes his voice and has a physical reaction to it:

the echo of one voice thrilled through and through. She could have caught at his arm for support, in the awful dizziness which wrapped her up, body and soul. That voice! No! if name and face, and figure, were all changed, that voice was the same which had touched her girlish heart, which had spoken most tender words of love, which had won, and wrecked her.

(225)

Ruth's initial physical response to Mr. Donne intensifies until others notice that something is wrong. Mr. Bradshaw and Mr. Donne go in to dinner, and Ruth sits in the sand and has "[s]o pale, so haggard, so wild, and wandering a look" (226) that Elizabeth tells her that she "will tell papa you are ill, and ask him to send for a doctor" (226). Ruth avoids a doctor's visit by "deceiv[ing] the girls into a belief that nothing had been the matter" (226), even though her "heart aches still" and she has the girls "feel how it flutters and beats" (226). Ruth is using the same strategy that Austen's Elinor Dashwood

uses to mask emotional pain with a screen of minor physical symptoms that she discusses as having no emotional import. Diagnosing herself as having an erratic heartbeat to the girls, who are mostly concerned with her “wild” and non-responsive demeanor, Ruth is able to keep them from worrying. Ruth dutifully gets the girls ready for bed, and all the while “her heart felt at times like ice, at times like burning fire” (227). Ruth has an emotional response to seeing Mr. Donne and to hearing his voice, and she also has a physical response that is mostly circulatory in nature. She has an emotional and a physical response of the heart.

After the girls go to bed, Ruth’s circulatory symptoms increase. The lovesickness she experiences here is extremely sexualized in its description. When she is finally alone in her room,

the tension did not give away immediately. She fastened her door, and threw open the window, cold and threatening as was the night. She tore off her gown; she put her hair back from her heated face. It seemed now as if she could not think – as if thought and emotion had been repressed so sternly that they would not come to relieve her stupefied brain. Till all at once, like a flash of lightning, her life, past and present, was revealed to her in its minutest detail. And when she saw her very present ‘Now’, the strange confusion of agony was too great to be borne, and she cried aloud. Then she was quite dead, and listened as to the sound of galloping armies. (228-9)

This episode is a somatic rendering of great sexual and emotional turmoil. Shelston notices that nature is sympathetic to Ruth in these passages: “This is something very different from the fatigue to which Victorian heroines are notoriously prone; born of the experience embodied in the novel and given shape by its embodiment in an instinctively appropriate natural imagery, it convinces in a way which I would claim is rare in the whole range of Victorian fiction” (188). This is not simply mental and physical fatigue. Ruth’s elevated heart rate affects her temperature and her ability to think clearly. Ruth’s body may be reacting to her desire for Donne, but the way Ruth sees time in this passage links this passage with her first loss of love rather than the first love itself. When Ruth leaves Wales, she remembers when she and Bellingham arrived there together, “living in the bright present, and strangely forgetful of the past or the future” (111). Once Bellingham leaves her, Ruth is painfully aware of a future without him and desires to die. Upon discovering that she is pregnant, she looks upon her future with hope. That this subsequent return of Bellingham as Donne is traumatic for her is seen in her living very much in the present “Now,” but unlike her initial self-abandonment to Bellingham, she no longer forgets her past (her separation from God) or her future (Leonard). Donne has physically changed and has a new name, but he is still living in the present and trying to get what he wants, while Ruth’s changes have been more profound.

While Ruth suffers from fever and delirium, she consciously translates her symptoms into a religious ideological framework. She now considers her desire for Bellingham and for an understanding of what happened to the two of them years ago to be wrong. She wonders, “What a depth of sin is in my heart! Why, the old time would

be as white as snow to what it would be now, if I sought him out, and prayed for the explanation, which would re-establish him in my heart” (229). Ruth knows that desiring to know what happened to their relationship is no more than hoping that she can find a reason to forgive Bellingham. Re-establishing him in her heart would push out God and Leonard. Miss Benson has warned her about idolizing fellow humans. That a second fall would be worse than the first makes sense in the context of her experience in a Christian home that has taught her proper relationships with others; “during the time of her residence in the Benson family, her feeling of what people ought to be had been unconsciously raised and refined” (238). When she fell the first time, she did not truly know how she had socially compromised herself until that little boy in Wales struck her and called her names, and she did not know how she had religiously compromised herself until she felt divine lovesickness in the Eccleston church. She has since experienced passionate maternal love. She has experienced divine love. She has learned to moderate her maternal love, so that she does not make Leonard an idol that distances her from God. She now knows the full depth of her sin, her social fall, her responsibility to Leonard, who she is striving to raise “into the full strength of a Christian” (229), and she knows that re-establishing Bellingham in her heart and abandoning herself to him means robbing God of devotion in favor of an unworthy idol.

Gaskell places Ruth in the throes of lovesickness after she rejects Donne’s offer of marriage. Donne coerces Ruth to meet him by telling her he knows about their son, and he tells her he desires things to be as they used to be between them. Ruth is not tempted by his offer to resume their former relations, and then Donne proposes, “I am

come to offer to marry you, Ruth” (253). Ruth refuses, claiming that she no longer loves him, “I do not love you. I did once. Don’t say I did not love you then; but I do not now... We are very far apart” (253). Ruth, who should marry for her son’s social standing, chooses for Leonard’s spiritual benefit not to marry Leonard’s father. Morgan compares Ruth’s power over her life here with Clarissa Harlowe’s: “And Clarissa’s fabulous cry that ‘my soul is above thee, man’ echoes in Ruth’s insistence to her old seducer that she no longer loves him and will never love him again. She will never marry him, never live with him, so that their son will never be like him” (47). Gaskell writes a lovesick, fallen woman, whose dynamic, post-fall changes (repentance, social responsibility, and education) leave her unable to fall for the flippant, unchanged Donne and unable to move on to a new suitor. Coral Lansbury writes:

The Victorians accepted single life as a prerequisite for the rare woman choosing public life. A single woman possessed authority and income that was denied a married woman. Far from seeing marriage as a woman’s goal, Gaskell appreciated the diversity of women’s natures. In her novels a woman is often most admirable when she refuses marriage. Poor Ruth in the novel of that name achieves a measure of dignity when she rejects Bellingham’s proposal, even though the marriage would give her instant respectability and legitimize her child. (112)

Ruth will undergo much social turmoil when Eccleston and Leonard discover that she is a fallen woman, but she is unwilling to prevent the troubles to come with re-entry into an

unequal relationship in which she must cede all parental and much religious power over to a man who is unable to wield that power well.

Both Ruth and Donne have emotional reactions to this encounter. Donne is “mortified” (254), and Ruth walks back to the house by herself, “almost stunned by the rapid beating of her heart” (254). She experiences many symptoms related to her lovesickness; “[h]er eyes were hot and dry; and at last became as if she were suddenly blind” (254). Ruth is unable to walk home, so she sinks to the ground: “[a]s Ruth’s limbs fell, so they lay. She had no strength, no power of volition to move a finger. She could not think or remember” (254). After Ruth rejects Donne’s offer of marriage, she again feels the effects of a circulatory disorder, and she is overcome with weakness and falls to the ground. This fall is different from her first because she is less animalistic than when Bellingham abandons her. This elevated heart rate and physical weakness seem to be the result of a strenuous exertion instead of her body’s spontaneous breaking into fever in emotional trauma. She first gets up because she has “a quick desire to see him once more” (255), but Donne is gone already, and Ruth is upset that she has been so angry with him. She exclaims, “I am so weary! I am so weary!” (255), as Tennyson’s lovesick Mariana does. The sunset calms her, and she returns to the Bradshaw’s vacation home to receive a letter that Leonard is ill. The Bradshaw girls are frightened “by Ruth’s sudden change from taciturn languor to eager, vehement energy. Body and mind seemed strained to exertion” (256). Ruth had a “feverish power, never resting, and trying never to have time to think” (256). Ruth has been upset by her encounter with Donne, but while Donne has the power to make her weak, the love that Ruth transferred from Donne

to Leonard now affects her with a maternal, lovesick fever as she fears that she will be separated from her son by his premature death.

Ruth's Contagion

When Ruth's status as a fallen woman becomes universally known in Ecclesford, Ruth is able to maintain a sense of herself as a repentant sinner, remaining meek in the face of somewhat brutal social opinion. Mrs. Bellingham's and Miss Benson's prior opinion that Ruth is contagious to those around her is later reasserted by Mr. Bradshaw, who resents the deception that allows a fallen woman to enter his home and become his children's caretaker. Nataka Freeland writes, "When pharisaical Mr. Bradshaw learns about Ruth's sinful past, he produces a catalogue of synonyms equating sexual transgression with actual filth: he denounces the 'corruption,' 'defilement,' and 'impurity,' which the 'stained' and 'contaminated' governess has covertly introduced into his pristine household" (809). Freeland compares Bradshaw's verbal connections between Ruth and dirt with his throwing her out as so much trash from his home. However, while his categorization of Ruth as an immoral woman who should be punished excuses him from any obligation to her future, as Susan Morgan notes, "Mr. Donne is also Ruth's seducer and Mr. Bradshaw the righteous citizen who exposes her sin. Part of the brilliance of the novel lies in connecting these two and showing us what that connection has to do with the role of the feminine in creating and interpreting history. The forces which use women are tied to the forces which condemn them" (50).³⁷ Having Bradshaw champion Mr. Donne for social power and prestige and having

Bradshaw cast Ruth out of his home when they are two halves of the same offense is brilliant. Gaskell reveals the hypocrisy of the social structures that define the fallen woman as diseased at the same time that it labels her seducer a public servant.

Bradford's eldest daughter Jemima and Mr. Benson both attempt to shield Ruth from Mr. Bradshaw's wrath, but Mr. Bradshaw sees only his betrayal, not Ruth's positive influence on his children. Mr. Bradshaw has been betrayed by the Bensons' lie to the congregation about Ruth's past, and he has been betrayed by his own daughter's not telling him of her discovery that Ruth is a fallen woman. He is able to use social prejudice towards fallen women to justify his anger to those around him who have made him feel foolish. Mr. Bradshaw justifies his refusal to associate with or to tolerate Ruth in his community by accepting the social censure placed on all fallen women; "let us have no more of this morbid way of talking. The world has decided how such women are to be treated; and, you may depend upon it, there is so much practical wisdom in the world, that its way of acting is right in the long run, and that no one can fly in its face with impunity, unless, indeed, they stoop to deceit and imposition" (293). Bradshaw is able to keep from feeling socially responsible for Ruth's well-being by clinging to the social understanding that the fallen woman falls only because of her degraded morals, and he is able to maintain his anger over the lie of her widowhood because of his fear that Ruth has been an agent of contagion in his house.

Gaskell, however, makes it difficult to see Ruth's contagion as a danger. Ruth's innocence strangely relates to Bradshaw's depiction of Ruth as depraved. R. K. Webb notes that while Gaskell does not necessarily write any of her characters as Unitarian,

she does write her novels from a Unitarian perspective (161). Webb also notes that “Gaskell’s tolerance and openness – virtues in which Unitarians left everyone else behind – made her unusually sensitive to the varieties of religious experience, though I might give even more credit to the wonderful ‘ear’ that allowed her to render the differing religious accents of her characters as impressively as she does their dialect” (158). Thus, while Bradshaw’s “tyranny over his family and his condemnation of Ruth and of Benson seem to arise from a conviction of original sin and belief in a judgemental God” (Webb 160), Gaskell does not let the narrative side with Bradshaw. Instead, Gaskell writes a moral tale that is more concerned with the social redemption of her heroine than with her salvation. Webb notes that salvation would be a moot point with the Unitarians, who do not believe in the divinity of Christ or his death for the forgiveness of all sins (145). Unitarians do not acknowledge a need for salvation, simply the human need to gain awareness of their responsibilities to each other. Gaskell even attacks the notion that fallen women should be kept at a distance from young, impressionable girls. Indeed, as Katherine A. Retan writes, “Ruth’s humility and gentleness, which stem from her sense that she is tainted, strike the stern Mr. Bradshaw, the most powerful member of Benson’s congregation, as the very qualities he would like to see cultivated in his own daughters” (194). Since Bradshaw understands vice to be contagious, he also expects virtue to be transmitted by a type of social contagion, and Ruth does pass on the qualities that Bradshaw wishes to see in his daughters, qualities that she possesses because she has experienced lovesickness.

The ability to sicken at the loss of love erases distinctions between classes of women and opens the door for the re-integration of fallen women into the novel's society. Jemima does sicken because of her proximity to Ruth as her father later fears could happen, and experiences a somewhat spontaneous participation in lovesickness for Mr. Farquahar, Mr. Bradshaw's business partner. Instead of inherently possessing good conduct, Jemima manipulates the ideals of good conduct to strike out at her father and mother against their "management" of her. As Retan notes, Jemima thwarts her father's plans for her marriage by "enacting a grotesque parody of 'correct' womanly behavior" (196). The narrator explains the effect of Jemima's learning that Ruth is a fallen woman, "Jemima had learnt some humility from the discovery which had been so great a shock; standing, she had learnt to take heed lest she fell" (309). Gaskell seems to agree with Hatano's statement, "since even respectable women had the same nature, they too might have been degraded if subjected to a decline in economic circumstances, a situation that could easily arise in an age of transition" (635). Jemima's attitude proves Mr. Bradshaw to be incorrect in his belief that a fallen woman is imminently corrupting to good girls. Gaskell shows that women experience love in complicated ways and that sororal sympathy and community can help girls make wise choices about their futures. Female sickness in this book is proof of rightness of heart, greatness of soul, and struggles with moral dilemmas. Fever burns away impurities. Jemima is a better person, who grows into a socially acceptable lady because of her contact with Ruth. Ruth is a social vaccine instead of a social contagion. She performs necessary social work in the Eccleston community and in the Bradshaw home. Gaskell does not write of a woman who falls and

lives forever in a depravity of mind and spirit that is only capable of injuring innocent women. She refuses to let Ruth be associated with evil in her novel but insists upon writing both of Ruth's fall and of her innate social value.

After Ruth's fall is universally known, Gaskell also writes Ruth as a healer. As Porter and Porter explain, the British experienced sickness in a very public manner with sections of the newspapers devoted to listing those with disease from one's own and surrounding communities. One of the reasons for this interest in the illness of others was to keep aware of and track epidemics. Contagion was justifiably feared before any germ theory educated the masses on how to prevent the contraction of an illness. Victorians encoded the physical reality of contagion with metaphors of moral sickness. Gaskell successfully pens the public fear of contagion in *Ruth* when she describes the social awareness of the beginnings of a major epidemic; "there came creeping, creeping, in hidden, slimy courses, the terrible fever – that fever which is never utterly banished from the sad haunts of vice and misery, but lives in such darkness, like a wild beast in the recesses of his den. It had begun in the low Irish lodging-houses" (354). Typhus is referred to in terrible and predatory terms, and it is associated with vice and sin.

Gaskell acknowledges the association of vice and typhus by associating the fever with a prejudicial social belief in the rampant vice of the Irish.³⁸ Gaskell changes the literary associations surrounding lovesickness by linking the fallen woman to lovesickness instead of linking the fallen woman to a less reputable disease in *Ruth*. A sick person's attitude about his/her illness is a means to judge that person's moral value. Early in the novel, Gaskell's narrator criticizes Bellingham, labeling of him as "morbid,"

“querulous,” and “peevish” when he is ill, and his lack of consideration for others is contrasted with Ruth’s constant concern for him in Wales. The only times that Ruth does not show concern for those around her, she is delirious from fever or experiencing despairing sorrow. While Bellingham is criticized by the narrator for his bad attitude and moral laxity, and his mother and her servants are afraid of him and are trying to appease him, Ruth is written as being capable of love, as being worthy of love, and as affecting others in as beneficial a way as she can. Because Ruth loves, loses, and becomes ill, the narrator and the Bensons see her as other than a typical fallen woman. However, Gaskell establishes how fallen women are considered repositories of moral contagion in *Ruth* and plays with that social metaphor, voicing the ideology while never letting it determine Ruth’s character.

Ruth, of course, physically heals the community when she is left no occupational choice but nursing, and the typhus epidemic breaks out. Taking a step from being a governess to being a nurse is a degrading one in nineteenth-century England;³⁹ however, this new social role is not degrading to Ruth’s spirit. The rector, Mr. Grey, notes, “When Mrs. Denbigh came forward, the panic was at its height, and the alarm of course aggravated the disorder” (362-3). Her courage and commitment to the care of all who entered the quarantine hospital is so great that the residents of Eccleston consider her to be sacrificing and angelic, saying, “[s]uch a one as her has never been a great sinner; nor does she do her work as a penance, but for the love of God, and of the blessed Jesus” (359). As with Hester Prynne, Ruth reverses her social standing and the regard of those around her through her good works. Instead of being defined as sinful and diseased,

Ruth is seen as a blessing. Ruth has performed several kinds of social work for her community. She has helped Mr. Bradshaw's daughters grow up with the realization that they must value themselves and enter equitable marriages, and she has selflessly served her community by risking the contraction of typhus and lovingly nursing those in quarantine.

Leonard's Contraction of Lovesickness

Mr. Bradshaw also sees Leonard as a source of social contagion. Mr. Bradshaw proclaims his fear for his children in a moment of anger, "That very child and heir of shame to associate with my own innocent children! I trust they are not contaminated" (284). Not only is the fallen woman seen as an agent of contamination in contrast to the seducing man, but her offspring is seen as an agent of that same contamination as well. Leonard proves that he is not contagious by his response to this situation. He is not hardened to other people's opinions or to the nature of the sin his mother committed. He is fearful of what people must think of him, and he hides from other children and other people in general. Leonard refuses to go outside unless he is asked to do so. Mr. Farquahar offers Mr. Benson the use of his *Times* after he is done with it each day to give the Bensons an errand to send Leonard on that will get him out of the house. Leonard does go to get the papers daily, and he seeks comfort from Sally for his experiences on the street; going "along by back streets – running with his head bent down – his little heart panting with dread of being pointed out as his mother's child – so he used to come back, and run trembling to Sally, who would hush him up to her breast

with many a rough-spoken word of pity and sympathy” (312). Leonard attempts to stay indoors unless he must face the world. Gaskell makes clear that his self-quarantine serves to keep others from hurting him, rather than him from injuring others.

While Leonard is never proven to be contagious, he is in danger from contagion from his own mother. Ruth does not pass on any moral degradation to those around her, but she does pass on her lovesickness, her tendency to sicken in response to rejection, to Leonard. After Leonard hears the truth about his parentage, “[h]is health seemed shaken, he spoke half sentences in his sleep, which showed that in his dreams he was battling on his mother’s behalf against an unkind and angry world. And then he would wail to himself, and utter sad words of shame, which they never thought had reached his ears” (305). Leonard is not able to sleep well and relives the worries of his day each night in his dreams. Leonard deeply loves his mother, and her confession to him of his illegitimacy threatens his identity with social rejection at the same time that it causes him to undergo a grieving process for the lies about his mother’s identity that he grew up believing. Leonard’s mother dies to him for a while, and he experiences a similar type of orphan lovesickness to Ruth’s earliest sickening at the loss of her own mother. Those around Leonard recognize his pain as being the kind of illness that should be treated with diversion. The Bensons and Ruth also notice that “[b]y day, he was in general grave and quiet; but his appetite varied, and he was evidently afraid of going into the streets, dreading to be pointed at as an object of remark. Each separately in their hearts longed to give him change of scene, but they were all silent, for where was the requisite money to come from?” (305). Leonard’s personality undergoes changes from a happy,

communicative child into a sober and quiet one. His desire for solitude and his lack of appetite are understandable as he undergoes this youthful emotional crisis. Leonard's "temper became fitful and variable. At times he would be most sullen against his mother; and then give way to a passionate remorse" (306). Leonard is alternately angry at his mother for not being what he believed her to be and sorry for adding to her pain. Leonard is experiencing the symptoms of lovesickness: loss of appetite, shame, need of diversion, and mood swings.

Leonard does not express his hurt over the "death" of his mother in exactly the same way that Ruth expresses the pain of her abandonment. He does not only hurt for himself and his mother; he is also angry at the situation they find themselves in. Ruth understands her son's hurt and anger and is patient, even when Leonard hurts her further by his lashing out at her; "[w]hen Mr Benson caught Ruth's look of agony at her child's rebuffs, his patience failed; or rather, I should say, he believed that a stronger, severer hand than hers was required for the management of the lad. But, when she heard Mr Benson say so, she pleaded with him" (305-6). Ruth accepts her responsibility for bringing this pain and this social awareness on her child. Ruth tells Mr. Benson, "I have deserved the anger that is fretting in his heart" (306), and she believes, "When he sees me really striving hard and long to do what is right, he must love me. I am not afraid" (306). The lovesickness that Leonard experiences, the weakening illness from which he only slowly recovers, is very similar to what his mother experienced years before after her betrayal in Wales, and this illness is as intimately related to Leonard's identity formation as it is to Ruth's. His identity is as abruptly changed by his discovery of his

illegitimacy as Ruth's identity changed when the young boy struck her face and called her a "naughty" woman. He flounders socially because of his suddenly becoming a social nonentity.

Ruth obtains poor employment and meekly accepts the censure of those around her. Leonard lives for a while with "fluctuations of spirits and health" (315). Just as Ruth is earlier prompted out of the worst throes of lovesickness by the claims of people around her, requiring her aid or her duty, she

called out his reverence at last, and what she said he took for his law with proud humility; and thus softly she was leading him up to God. His health was not strong; it was not likely to be. He moaned and talked in his sleep, and his appetite was still variable, part of which might be owing to his preference of the hardest lessons to any out-door exercise. But this last unnatural symptom was vanishing before the assiduous kindness of Mr Farquahar, and the quiet but firm desire of his mother. (321)

Leonard's health is permanently affected by the lovesickness that has been passed on to him from his mother. Because his health is visibly altered, Leonard is provided the help he needs from motherly love to the kind attentions of a local, respected businessman, Mr. Farquahar.

The novel ends shortly after Ruth dies from a fever that she contracts while tending to Mr. Donne. The physician Mr. Davis tells Ruth that Mr. Donne has taken ill and Ruth begs to nurse him because he is Leonard's father. Mr. Davis asks if Ruth still loves him, and the Ruth who confidently declares to Mr. Donne that she does not love

him, is unsure with Mr. Davis: “I don’t think I should love him, if he were well and happy – but you said he was ill – and alone – how can I help caring for him?” (369). Gaskell’s choice of words allows a double understanding of “caring for him.” Ruth can’t help caring for him as in nursing the father of her son, or she can’t help but love him, or both. Gaskell has buried Ruth’s motives for her fall, and she buries Ruth’s motives for going to nurse Donne. Ruth does go to Donne, who is a “wild, raging figure, and with soft authority made him lie down” (371), and speaks to him “in a way that acted like a charm in hushing his mad talk” (371). The patients that Ruth helped in the fever ward are violent and raving, as is Mr. Donne as she ministers to him. Ruth’s ever calming presence soothes Donne and relieves Donne’s terrified valet.

Just as Donne leaves Ruth after his first illness to face her own fever, delirium, and death wish, so does Donne’s recovery from his second illness mark Ruth’s contraction of an illness that is very different than the one from which he suffers. Typhus is described and contrasted with the sickness from which Ruth suffers and dies. Mr. Bellingham’s diseases are purely somatic, while Ruth’s are somatic, emotive, and intimately related to her identity. Mr. Donne’s delirium is caused by his fevers, and with the abatement of the fevers comes the return of his sanity. In Donne’s sickroom, she sinks “into a whirling stupor of sense and feeling” (372). Ruth faints, and Mr. Davis takes her home to the Bensons’ house. Her illness is not written in the same terms in which the sinful, creeping typhus is earlier described. Ruth “displayed no outrage or discord even in her delirium” (374), and she “sang continually, very soft, and low” (374). Ruth experiences an Opheliac illness caused by her “caring” for Donne.

Succumbing to entirely non-specific symptoms, Ruth's "strength faded day by day" (375). Her illness is different from the victims of typhus because Gaskell sets her illness up to be read as lovesickness.

The narrator foreshadows Ruth's death at her first loss of Bellingham in Wales, establishing that when Ruth dies, she will be thinking of Bellingham. This romantic death is the natural conclusion of spontaneous lovesickness; it is passive and not at all horrible. All who care about her are standing "around her bedside, not speaking, or sighing, or moaning; they were too much awed by the exquisite peacefulness of her look for that. Suddenly she opened wide her eyes, and gazed intently forwards, as if she saw some happy vision, which called out a lovely, rapturous, breathless smile" (375). Ruth speaks of the "Light" (375) coming, stretches out her arms to it, and falls back dead. Those who love Ruth most are present at her death, but her bier is "borne by some of the poor to whom she had been very kind in her lifetime. And many others stood aloof in the little burying-ground, sadly watching the last ceremony" (380). Ruth's last illness is distinctive from the typhoid that wreaked havoc in the community, and her death allows that community to express its social acceptance of Ruth. Her social role as nurse and comforter is established over that of fallen woman at her burial. This social acceptance is not useful to Ruth, but the sadness of its timing underscores Gaskell's argument for a viable social position for deserving (capable of becoming lovesick) fallen women.

The symptoms of lovesickness resurface in Leonard at the death of his lovesick mother; "[h]e neither spoke nor cried for many hours; and all Jemima's wiles were called forth, before his heavy heart could find the relief of tears. And then he was so

weak, and his pulse so low, that all who loved him feared for his life” (376). Leonard, having already at a young age experienced and survived an acquired lovesickness, also survives the grief and loss of identity around the death of a beloved mother in his youth. While Barbara Thaden notes that the the number of dead mother plots in the Victorian novel implies that a mother has little or no influence on her children, Gaskell writes a heroine who is both in need of her mother’s guidance in her youth and who fully recognizes her importance to her child.⁴⁰ Thaden observes that Gaskell “participates in the creation of an ideology which refutes the belief that mothers have nothing to offer their children, if they can pass on neither power nor money. Gaskell argues that mothers offer their children the foundations of life, of happiness and mental health, a view seemingly corroborated by twentieth-century investigations into the effects of maternal deprivation” (Thaden 34). The doctor’s desire to apprentice Leonard when he is of age seems a thoroughly appropriate response to Leonard’s participation with his mother’s lovesickness; the illegitimate son of the fallen, lovesick nurse should be a doctor. He understands the power of society to injure, and because of his mother’s patience and the Benson’s care, he understands the power of society to heal as well.

Jane Austen portrayed lovesickness as a technology of the self with which a young girl could discover her own heart or with which a heartbroken girl could express the extent of her suffering to others. Elizabeth Gaskell uses lovesickness as a way to provide a social role for the fallen woman. The physical aspects of the fallen woman’s sickness lend legitimacy to the nineteenth-century reformers, who wished to establish more effective means of aid than penitentiaries and brothels. That Ruth was often

“bodily wearied with her spiritual suffering” (244) indicates that fallen women might be neither hardened to sin nor agents of social contagion. Physical illness demands physical care, and Mr. Benson is allowed to provide aid to the sick, where he might not have been able to provide a home for a healthy, fallen woman. Gaskell’s novel nears its end with the comment that “it is God’s will that the women who have fallen should be numbered among those who have broken hearts to be bound up, not cast aside as lost beyond recall” (294). She ties lovesickness and fallenness intimately together in an attempt to define nineteenth-century social responsibility to care for a class of women that middle-class England is uncomfortable discussing and with whom middle-class society would never accept a relationship. Gaskell uses lovesickness to prove the social and religious value of the fallen woman – the barometer of the soul that reveals a fallen woman’s inherently loving nature and potential to benefit society if she were allowed readmittance to it. Gaskell uses lovesickness to render a social evil socially acceptable, even though she is constrained by lovesickness to destroy Ruth as she nurses Donne to prove the depth of the love that she has earlier overcome.

CHAPTER IV

UNFEELING HEARTS AND MONSTROUS WOMEN: DISPLACED LOVESICKNESS AND THE SOCIAL CURSE OF THE LOVESICK WOMAN IN DICKENS'S *GREAT EXPECTATIONS*

What *was* it that was borne in upon my mind when she stood still and looked attentively at me? Anything that I had seen in Miss Havisham? No. In some of her looks and gestures there was that tinge of resemblance to Miss Havisham which may often be noticed to have been acquired by children, from grown persons with whom they have been much associated and secluded, and which, when childhood is past, will produce a remarkable occasional likeness of expression between faces that are otherwise quite different. And yet I could not trace this to Miss Havisham. I looked again, and though she was still looking at me, the suggestion was gone. (237-8)

Pip, the protagonist of *Great Expectations*, attempts to categorize an air about the woman whom he has been infatuated with since childhood, Estella. Estella's attitude both reminds Pip of Estella's grotesque guardian, Miss Havisham, and yet cannot be attributed to Miss Havisham. This resemblance of Estella to Miss Havisham comes at the moment that Estella claims to have no heart. Dickens writes that Pip, as all good lovers do, gets "through some jargon" of lovers to claim the existence of Estella's heart by the presence of her beauty, saying, "there could be no such beauty without it [a heart]" (237).⁴¹ Dickens, however, complicates the conventional love plot by creating a

heartless, beautiful, and self-aware object of affection. Estella replies to Pip in all seriousness, “Oh! I have a heart to be stabbed in or shot in, I have no doubt, . . . and, of course, if it ceased to beat I should cease to be. But you know what I mean. I have no softness there, no – sympathy – sentiment – nonsense” (237). Estella responds to Pip’s loving by accepting that beauty requires a physical heart, but she insists that physiology and emotion are not the same thing.⁴² Somehow, the insistence that physical health and emotional health are *not* connected provides Pip with this uncomfortable feeling that Estella is like Miss Havisham. Of course, Estella cannot physically resemble her adopted mother, and while Pip tries to trace Estella’s likeness to Miss Havisham through an understanding of Estella’s secluded childhood and an adoption of mannerisms, he is not entirely successful in his attempt. In the moment of Estella’s declaring her inability to love, Pip thinks of the lovesick Miss Havisham, and while he cannot determine how Estella and her adoptive mother resemble each other, he does not think of the lovesick mother and the loveless daughter as opposites.

Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Ruth* revealed a unique relationship between the lovesick mother and her son. Ruth’s lovesickness, which goes into remission with her knowledge that she will have a child, returns when her past surfaces and causes that child pain. Her desire for Bellingham and her worldly innocence cause a sickness that is ultimately transferred to Leonard. Leonard undergoes a transformation from a healthy, active boy with friends to a sickly and studious introvert. Unlike Gaskell, who shows that improper love affects the next generation physically and emotionally, Dickens shows that a mother’s lovesickness will be written on a daughter’s heart, but not to give her a languid

pulse or a shamed and blushing face. Estella is like Miss Havisham precisely because she proves that lovesickness is not a real, clinical malady, but a behavioral choice.

Estella's hardness of body and hardness of heart bring Miss Havisham to Pip's mind precisely because Miss Havisham, who relies deeply on her identity as a lovesick woman, is not in love and has a remarkably strong constitution.⁴³ Estella is not the polar opposite of Miss Havisham or the register of a generation gap. Less than an image, she is the emotionless mirage of beauty, desirability, and high class, which belies Miss Havisham's healthy, class-driven heart as full of wounded love. Pip spends more time around Miss Havisham and Estella than any other character does, and yet he is at a total loss for what to make of them. He pities and feels a need to protect the lovesick Miss Havisham, and he desires to protect Estella from her own self-aware lovelessness. That Pip is duped by Miss Havisham and is incapable of believing that Estella has no heart for sentimentality is a sign of the strength of the cultural assumptions surrounding women's love and women's loss.

The other authors this dissertation has discussed encounter limiting cultural assumptions about women's love that they trouble with the inclusion of literary lovesickness in their texts. Jane Austen attacks the romantic ideology of the impossibility of second attachments in *Sense and Sensibility* in which Edward's, Col. Brandon's, and Marianne's happiness all rely upon their ability to attach to a new love. In *Ruth* Elizabeth Gaskell writes women who sicken for thwarted love and who can at least temporarily heal their bodies by their ability to redirect love to another recipient. Both Ruth's ability to live for her son instead of for herself and her ability to worship

God in the postures of a lover earn her relief from her desires for Bellingham. Novelists in the nineteenth century allow an alternative to dying from lovesickness, which is redirecting one's thwarted love onto a recipient who will not reject it.

Dickens shows the reader another alternative to this nineteenth-century understanding of lovesickness. Dickens introduces us to a character who is unwilling to turn her love in a new direction and yet who lives on to influence the lives of others. Miss Havisham, who does not redirect her love from the site of her rejection and pain, becomes isolated and focused upon hate.⁴⁴ The refusal to aim love away from the site of its humiliation causes problems for romantic texts. A lovesick woman full of shame and loss is powerful, influencing both men and women. Society has no means of dealing with a woman who cannot redirect her thwarted love into new love or a passion for something else; a romantic text could only explain her death or her diminishment. However, Dickens does not establish the lovesick woman as a woman with a faded and gentle disposition—the kindly odd woman.⁴⁵ Instead, he places Miss Havisham in a position of limited authority on the periphery of his text from which she demands attention and reveals the chaos that occurs around her. Miss Havisham is a lovesick odd woman who must use lovesickness as a technology of the self to be understood as a victim by society and in order to vaccinate her adopted daughter from her sickened life. Estella is unable to feel love, which does not protect her from lovesickness as much as it allows her to understand that as a woman outside the discourse of love, she is participating in the same type of aberrant gender role as her adopted mother. Dickens frees a character from the literary discourses of love, but he does not free that woman

from an unhappy marriage. Like Austen and Gaskell, Dickens manifests in his text the social misery of thwarted love and the social misery of never loving at all.

An Immensely Rich and Grim Lady

That Dickens introduces Miss Havisham before he tells her story adds to the oddness of her spectacle, but this presentation of a powerful and angry woman contrasts with the story she tells of herself as lovesick. Discussing “A Madman’s Manuscript,” Jeremy Tambling points out that the “editor’s judgement on the madman, the right to pronounce on him, marks the power of a controlling discourse to define the case, to construct the other’s madness in terms that normality can understand. The editor’s document reveals the power of a discourse to pronounce, using terms which seem clinically relevant, but are tautologies: morbid insanity, raving madness” (65). Miss Havisham is so vaguely odd because she presents herself as a woman with a broken heart, and the only editor who can help the reader understand her particular variety of madness is a little boy who is not the most reliable judge of character. She presents a picture of lovesickness that is easy to label as lovesickness at the same time that it is at odds with reader expectation, and Dickens’s use of a child to describe and to attempt to understand Miss Havisham’s character encourages the reader to be as gullible as the young Pip. Pip narrates that he “had heard of Miss Havisham up town – everybody for miles had heard of Miss Havisham up town – as an immensely rich and grim lady who lived in a large and dismal house barricaded against robbers, and who led a life of seclusion” (51). Miss Havisham is known commonly as a reclusive, rich, and unhappy

woman who is protecting herself from thieves. She is commonly known for everything except her broken heart. Pip hears of her heartbreak from her own lips, but he hears the circumstances around her heartbreak from her nephew Herbert after he is grown up. This description of Miss Havisham that lacks any reference to lovesickness may be a result of a child describing lovesickness, something that he does not understand, but Pip's failure to comprehend Miss Havisham's lovesickness allows the reader to be surprised by her initial appearance and manner.

Pip has a tendency to form ideas from the very prosaic or substantial things in front of him. The novel begins with a Pip who has never seen his parents, and thus his "first fancies regarding what they were like, were unreasonably derived from their tombstones. The shape of the letters on my father's, gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, '*Also Georgiana Wife of the Above*,' I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly" (3). The adult Pip who narrates this novel for his childish, adolescent, and young adult self often pokes fun of himself in these moments when his younger self missed what was going on around him because he was so literal.

In the same way that Dickens proves that the childish Pip cannot have an adult insight, Dickens also uses Pip's childishness to point to truths behind reality. Pip's understanding of his sister's having brought him up by hand is intimately related to her frequent use of Tickler, and his understanding of "bringing up" is thus more related to violence than to child-rearing: "Having at that time to find out for myself what the expression meant, and knowing her to have a hard and heavy hand, and to be much in

the habit of laying it upon her husband as well as upon me, I supposed that Joe Gargery and I were both brought up by hand” (7-8). Obviously, Mrs. Joe is not raising her blacksmith husband, but Joe’s acceptance of her physical violence towards him is what allows Pip to read Joe as a child, as a person not in control. The reader discovers later that Joe is very much in control of himself and that his acceptance of physical abuse from his wife is his way of protecting her from male physical violence like his own mother endured. While the childish Pip sees Joe as not in control of his home, the grown Pip learns Joe is in control of the level of physical violence there. Pip’s initial description of Miss Havisham is also true and inaccurate. He understands Miss Havisham as reclusive, grim, rich, and fearful of robbers, and while all these characteristics are childishly true, they are also the face of the grotesquely lovesick woman, or the woman who participates in the lovesickness tradition in grotesque parody of it.⁴⁶

Miss Havisham’s environment and clothes are detailed in these scenes in a macabre version of the cataloguing of the beautiful features of a lover. Austen and Gaskell list both self-induced and naturally occurring physical symptoms of lovesickness in their heroines, but Dickens elaborated upon an artful arrangement of the props of lovesickness. The spatial arrangement of items in Satis House is so exact that these passages read like stage directions, and Miss Havisham herself, though seated center stage, is not given a perspective or point of view until much later in the novel. Anny Sadrin notes that “‘non-actant’ though she may be, Miss Havisham, with her stage-trappings and the artificially-lit décor of her show-rooms, remains one of the best-

remembered characters in the novel, the very impersonation of romance” (88). By relegating the lovesick woman to the position of minor character, Dickens’s narrator focuses less on what she feels and endures than on what she causes others (including the main character) to feel and endure. While Miss Havisham may not see herself as creepy, the young Pip does. Entering a dark, candle-lit dressing-room, Pip sees a dressing-table and a “fine lady” (57), “with an elbow resting on the table and her head leaning on that hand” (57). Pip describes Miss Havisham as “the strangest lady I have ever seen, or shall ever see” (57); “She was dressed in rich materials – satins, and lace, and silks – all of white. Her shoes were white. And she had a long white veil dependent from her hair, and she had bridal flowers in her hair, but her hair was white. Some bright jewels sparkled on her neck and on her hands, and some other jewels lay sparkling on the table” (57). Pip’s initial impression of Miss Havisham is of her absence of color; she is snowy white. That her hair is white indicates her age and a disjunction between her age and her youthful, bridal dress.

Dresses, less splendid than the dress she wore, and half-packed trunks, were scattered about. She had not quite finished dressing, for she had but one shoe on – the other was on the table near her hand – her veil was but half arranged, her watch and chain were not put on, and some lace for her bosom lay with those trinkets, and with her handkerchief, and gloves, and some flowers, and a prayer-book, all confusedly heaped about the looking-glass. (57)

Along with the bridal whiteness of this scene, the room looks as if the bride were in haste – one shoe is on, her veil is half arranged, her watch is not yet on, her trunks are half-packed, and the items she would carry to the church are left “confusedly” in a pile.⁴⁷ Sara Thornton notes two effects of the appearance of haste: “The element of confusion and haphazardness is important here since the effect is of someone being caught in the act, frozen in a moment of time with the superfluous appendages of existence lying uselessly about as if to emphasize their transience and worthlessness” (107). Time appears to stand still and the objects that are symbols of Miss Havisham’s status as single, beloved and religiously observant seem treasured because they have been kept in their original positions since the day of her jilting, and yet they are worthless because they symbolize lies. Miss Havisham is single, but she was never loved by her fiancé nor does she turn to her religion for solace as Gaskell’s Ruth learns to do. Miss Havisham will not seek an independent sense of self apart from her one catastrophic mistake in love. The whiteness also adds to what Lucy Frost describes as “the presence of a haunted mind in a haunted world” (17); Miss Havisham is made ghostly by her presence as something that almost was – a bride – and not what is – an immensely rich and grim lady.

The grown Pip who helps to narrate the novel admits that this is already a lot of detail for a child to have noticed, but he insists upon his having seen much of it in his first moments in the room and then presents further description that is somewhat corrective of what he has already presented:

I saw that everything within my view which ought to be white, had been white long ago, and had lost its lustre, and was faded and yellow. I saw that the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress, and like the flowers, and had no brightness left but the brightness of her sunken eyes. I saw that the dress had been put upon the rounded figure of a young woman, and that the figure upon which it now hung loose, had shrunk to skin and bone. Once I had been taken to see some ghastly waxwork at the Fair, representing I know not what impossible personage lying in state. Once, I had been taken to one of our old marsh churches to see a skeleton in the ashes of a rich dress, that had been dug out of a vault under the church pavement. Now, waxwork and skeleton seemed to have dark eyes that moved and looked at me. I should have cried out, if I could. (57-8)

Everything about Miss Havisham that is white in the previous passage is now yellowed, and nothing about the scene is right. Sadrin writes, “The trappings of romance are ... carnivalistic reversals or denials of some natural order, which is itself a delusion” (87). Pip can only compare the woman sitting before him in a languid and ultra-feminine posture before her lady’s dressing-table to things that resemble human form yet never lived or are no longer living. Tambling notes that the “gap between the two paragraphs [describing Miss Havisham] evokes an experience that has not happened; a gap which emphasizes a sexual failure and denies an identity to the woman” (74). Tambling correctly notes that withered bride and dress mark the failure of adult, female sexuality,

which even the childish Pip cannot reconcile with his immature ideas of a living woman. To the onlooker Miss Havisham's identity as a mature woman is compromised by her unconsummated love, and Pip can only imagine her as a nonhuman waxwork, an "impossible personage." Indeed, the effect that Miss Havisham and her surroundings have on Pip is extraordinary, causing him great discomfort. Andrea Gilchrist writes, "The grotesque in Miss Havisham probably inspires far more horror than laughter in the reader, as well as in Pip. And she is still more horrible because her rigid, macabre world she has shut out everything that is normally considered natural and life-sustaining; she is totally isolated" (77). Even though Miss Havisham has shut out every life-sustaining thing from her room, there is still life in it, and it is the horror of meeting a living waxwork or seeing a skeleton look back at him from its grave that horrifies Pip so much. In the dark room and because of the age of the bridal artifacts there, color, even whiteness, is faded and dimmed, except for Miss Havisham's dark eyes, which stand out in the yellowed room because of their contrast and their movement.

Eyes are, of course, important in a literary romantic tradition. The eyes were traditionally the means of love entering the body. A man would see a beautiful lady, and Cupid would shoot him in the eyes with an arrow that pierced him to the heart. While Dickens's portrayal here of a lovesick woman is not a love scene, it does make a grotesque play with literary love. Thus, the eyes of the lovesick woman, which once received the admiring gaze of her lover,⁴⁸ are now more actively looking around her and are able to wound. The lovesick woman is thrust from a passive feminine object of the gaze, not to an active and masculine Petrarchan desiring of what she sees,⁴⁹ but to an

actively militant and masculine Cupid role. Miss Havisham wishes to wound with her eyes, moving men from a place of powerful gazing in which they may control what they see and how they respond to it to a more insecure gazing in which she controls their vision of her by her elaborate staging of unrequited love, forcing them to recognize female will and desire. She also controls their viewing of Estella and watches and encourages the formation of male desire for her.

Miss Havisham's inspection of Pip makes him uncomfortable. The lovesick woman, a spectacle in this novel, reveals the pain of being seen in her forceful looking at others. Miss Havisham orders, "Come nearer, let me look at you. Come close" (58). She is not only looking, she is establishing her power over Pip as the object of her gaze, directing him to stand closer and acknowledging that she is looking. Pip's discomfort is seen in his inability to return her gaze; "It was when I stood before her, avoiding her eyes, that I took note of the surrounding objects in detail, and saw that her watch had stopped at twenty minutes to nine, and that a clock in the room had stopped at twenty minutes to nine" (58). Pip's close observations of Miss Havisham's room may be unusual in a child, but they are explained by his trying to find somewhere to direct his eyes. He recognizes the impropriety of looking at a lady in her sickness and tries not to look at her, even directing the reader's attention away from the pain of his powerlessness before a woman who has learned that the female spectacle can objectify the male subject.

Miss Havisham's participation in lovesickness and presentation of herself as a spectacle is not something she must do for herself alone. She desires to be an object of

attention because she can establish her own reading of her humiliation and loss, which is only possible by her directing the male gaze to her person as she identifies the characteristics of herself that are the most in accordance with literary lovesickness. Miss Havisham tells Pip that she has not seen the sun since before he was born, and she declares that her heart is “Broken!” with “an eager look, and with strong emphasis, and with a weird smile that had a kind of boast in it” (58). Miss Havisham denies the right of the medical establishment to read her according to a specific set of symptoms by declaring her heart to be broken and diagnosing her own ailment to Pip. Her affect, however, is neither clinical, nor sad, as one would expect. She smiles as she declares her lovesick status with an “eager look.” Her eagerness to read Pip’s reaction to her disclosure is not an exhibition of self-centeredness that is a conventional part of female lovesickness. Unlike Gaskell’s Ruth who is unable to keep her loss a secret from others because she is at the mercy of feelings that she cannot control, Miss Havisham presents her pain in a straightforward manner, owning her emotional and physical ailment completely unconcerned by the stigma of her situation except in respect to how the young Pip will respond to it.

In contrast to Miss Havisham’s seeing herself with a broken heart, Tambling sees Miss Havisham as a hysteric (69) and defines hysteria as “any symptoms that may be observed or constructed, primarily in women, in order to regulate them. The novelist who uses it enters into such a policing of women’s bodies, or of male femininity” (69). However, Dickens is not regulating Miss Havisham. She is not only being policed or punished by this text; in fact, Dickens seems to be aware not only that symptoms of ill

health are powerful tools with which to blight his female characters, but that the female characters who understand the power of their symptoms to regulate the behavior of others are able to police those around them. Tambling also writes, “To imply that it is the condition of most women, emphasizes the power of confession, for the self is now impelled to name itself as subject to the discourse of hysteria. ... [*Great Expectations*] does not imply any marginalization of these women, since it allows no space for a normality which is not itself severely damaged” (69). Seeing Miss Havisham as confessing hysteria is problematic, since Miss Havisham avoids labeling herself in the text. She describes her life and her condition to Pip, but she does not use the words “hysteria” or “lovemadness,” which accounts for her larger scope of influence than is typical for a character who is clearly known by others [and herself] to be mad or subject to delirium. Dickens allows Miss Havisham a linguistic slippage that enables her to play the victim as she wields powerful influence over dependents, partially because it allows others to be dependent upon her at the same time that it enforces their need to protect her from further harm.

At this point Miss Havisham becomes slowly aware of herself in her performance. She takes her hands down from her heart because of their heaviness. “Afterwards, she kept her hands there for a little while, and slowly took them away as if they were heavy” (58). Her sense of the weight of her hands is a subtle symptom, yet one of only a couple of physical symptoms of literary lovesickness. This weight of limb can be read as an Opheliac dragging heaviness under which Miss Havisham is sinking, but Miss Havisham’s weakness may stem from the difficulty of staging this performance of

herself. She tires in her participation in lovesickness. In the next passage, Miss Havisham explains this particular invalidism as a form of lovesickness when she declares that “I am tired . . . I want diversion, and I have done with men and women. Play” (59). She explains her tiredness as mental, not physical weariness, and John Cunningham notes that “the death-in-life present in Satis House is, of course, not satisfying” (89). Miss Havisham’s performance of lovesickness is not enough for her, which can be seen in her need for distraction. Miss Havisham’s ailment seems to be intimately related to the conditions pressed upon women who have lost love as described by Jane Austen’s *Anne Eliot*.⁵⁰ Because women are not free to move about and are forced to stay home in a limited environment, they find it more difficult to forget the men they love and lose than it is for the men who may forget them. Dickens’ narrator presents the reader with no Austenian figure here, however. A. L. French writes that Miss Havisham’s seclusion “is a deliberate and conscious adult decision—a way (it is hinted) of ostensibly taking revenge on a world that has let one down, while in fact taking revenge on oneself for one’s inadequacy, the inadequacy consisting in having *been* let down” (158). French correctly notices Miss Havisham’s pain and sense of inadequacy over her loss of love and her unusual means of handling it. Miss Havisham is constrained to a tiny space, but she willfully chooses to be constrained, and she commands all that occurs in that space. She admits to a mildly hysterical symptom of lovesickness, and her querulous tone makes it impossible for the reader to sympathize with her; “I sometimes have sick fancies,” she went on, “and I have a sick fancy that I want to see some play. There, there!” with an impatient movement of the fingers of her

right hand; “play, play, play!” (59). Her “sick fancies” should cause the reader to pity her, but the impatience of her movements and her commanding tone repel sympathy.

Not only is Miss Havisham’s mental condition not lamentable enough to awaken a sense of pity in the reader, but she continues to prove herself adept at psychological warfare. A duel of the eyes between Pip and Miss Havisham follows her demand that he “play” for her, and Pip accepts her vision of herself as needing sympathy. Pip

stood looking at Miss Havisham in what I suppose she took for a dogged manner, inasmuch as she said, when we had taken a good look at each other:

“Are you sullen and obstinate?”

“No, ma’am, I am very sorry for you, and very sorry I can’t play just now. If you complain of me I shall get into trouble with my sister, so I would do it if I could; but it’s so new here, and so strange, and so fine – and melancholy –” I stopped, fearing I might say too much, or had already said it, and we took another long look at each other.

Before she spoke again, she turned her eyes from me, and looked at the dress she wore, and at the dressing-table, and finally at herself in the looking-glass. (59)

The eyes are pivotal in this scene. Miss Havisham reads Pip’s looking at her as “dogged” until Pip expresses pity for her. Sympathy, which she seems not to expect, causes her to turn her eyes away from him. She stares at him when she assumes that he is obstinate, but when she receives pity, when others’ eyes are not trying to cause her

pain by objectifying her, when they actually empathize as well as see, it causes her to soften and turn her dark eyes away. Pity also causes her to become introspective. She turns her eyes upon herself in the looking-glass. Pip's honest sorrow for Miss Havisham causes her to see herself through his eyes—gives her a new way of seeing herself and her performance of lovesickness; “So new to him,” she muttered, “so old to me; so strange to him, so familiar to me; so melancholy to both of us!” (59). Miss Havisham, “flashing a look at [Pip]” (59), directs him to “Call Estella” (59), reverting to her use of her eyes as weapons and ending their isolation and the introspection that comes with hearing the honest communication of a child.

While her performance of lovesickness is over the top and calculated for its effect on spectators, Miss Havisham's ability to become introspective about her situation and see herself through Pip's eyes reveals just how much of her performance is second nature, or “so old,” to her now. Miss Havisham's behavior is not unconsciously done, but it is also not only adopted for the benefit of others. She constantly enacts the behaviors of a lady obsessively in love.

It was then I began to understand that everything in the room had stopped, like the watch and the clock, a long time ago. I noticed that Miss Havisham put down the jewel exactly on the spot from which she had taken it up. As Estella dealt the cards, I glanced at the dressing-table again, and saw that the shoe upon it, once white, now yellow, had never been worn. I glanced down at the foot from which the shoe was absent, and saw that the silk stocking on it, once white, now yellow, had been

trodden ragged. Without this arrest of everything, this standing still of all the pale decayed objects, not even the withered bridal dress on the collapsed form could have looked so like grave-clothes, or the long veil so like a shroud.

So she sat, corpse-like, as we played at cards; the frillings and trimmings on her bridal dress, looking like earthy paper. I knew nothing then, of the discoveries that are occasionally made of bodies buried in ancient times, which fall to powder in the moment of being distinctly seen; but, I have often thought since, that she must have looked as if the admission of the natural light of day would have struck her to dust. (60)

Pip associates love with death in this scene. Without mentioning love itself, Pip recognizes that the symbolism of the bridal artifacts are out of sync with the signs of decay. Not only is everything that is supposed to be bridal and white yellowed with age, but everything in this room is fixated with time while it tries to remain out of time. Paul Sheehan reads Miss Havisham as “incarcerated ... in the *idée fixe* of her obsessive mourning” (99). She is living in the present, taking up jewels, watching card games, needing entertainment and distraction, but she is participating in the moment of her humiliation by replacing a jewel she plays with in the exact location from which she picks it up. She is actively participating in lovesickness by restoring a type of lovesick order to the room. She is presently performing twenty-to-nine of the day that she was jilted in every action that keeps things the same as they were that morning of her wedding day. This combination of time moving forward (decaying body and clothes)

with a “standing still” of the artifacts of love is what makes Pip see the lady participating in the lovesickness tradition as a dead body in a shroud. Pip does not need to have had a literary education to know intuitively that this lady should not have outlived her love—that it is unnatural for a lady to exist without a functioning heart.

Miss Havisham seems most alive when she knowingly perpetuates her image of herself as wronged and when her eyes actively seek to know how she is affecting those about her. It is when her participation becomes too much for her, when she lets down her guard, that she seems most corpse-like, weak, or ready to die.

Saving for the one weird smile at first, I should have felt almost sure that Miss Havisham’s face could not smile. It had dropped into a watchful and brooding expression – most likely when all the things about her had become transfixed – and it looked as if nothing could ever lift it up again. Her chest had dropped, so that she stooped; and her voice had dropped, so that she spoke low, and with a dead lull upon her; altogether, she had the appearance of having dropped, body and soul, within and without, under the weight of a crushing blow. (61)

Her exhausting lovesickness causes Pip to see her as harmed from without, stricken and crushed. Jennifer Gribble notes, “Satis House cannot shut out the ongoing processes of life itself, however weird and parasitic they become in that atmosphere; it is Miss Havisham’s failure to control those processes in herself that so grotesquely mocks her attempts to stop the clocks” (129). The macabre nature of Miss Havisham’s performance of lovesickness comes from her imposition upon her life’s story of a certain set of social

texts that are no longer entirely appropriate. Her staging herself as just jilted is laughable when in Pip's whole first encounter of her, no groom is referenced, expected, or missed, and her bridal accoutrements are artifacts that do not fit her person or her situation.

Miss Havisham does not want to know what day it is,⁵¹ but every year she is unable to escape knowing her birthday because her relatives insist upon visiting her on it. This is the day that Compeyson jilted her, and the day that she chooses to relive in perpetual participation in a feminine culture surrounding weddings. Pip visits her on this day, learns more about her story, and witnesses her power over Satis House and over her relatives.

Certain wintry branches of candles on the high chimney-piece faintly lighted the chamber: or, it would be more expressive to say, faintly troubled its darkness. It was spacious, and I dare say had once been handsome, but every discernible thing in it was covered with dust and mould, and dropping to pieces. The most prominent object was a long table with a tablecloth spread on it, as if a feast had been in preparation when the house and the clocks all stopped together. An epergne or centre-piece of some kind was in the middle of this cloth; it was so heavily overhung with cobwebs that its form was quite indistinguishable; and, as I looked along the yellow expanse out of which I remember its seeming to grow, like a black fungus, I saw speckled-legged spiders with blotchy bodies running home to it, public importance had just transpired in the spider community.

I heard the mice too, rattling in the panels, as if the same occurrence were important to their interests. But, the black-beetles took no notice of the agitation, and groped about the hearth in a ponderous elderly way, as if they were short-sighted and hard of hearing, and not on terms with one another.

These crawling things had fascinated my attention and I was watching them from a distance, when Miss Havisham laid a hand upon my shoulder. In her other hand she had a crutch-headed stick on which she leaned, and she looked like the Witch of the place. (84-5)

Miss Havisham has allowed a large and beautiful space to suffer decay and to lose its value. The center-piece of unrecognizable “bride-cake” (85) and the community that Pip’s imagination sees in it replicates Miss Havisham’s reality. A whole world revolving around one event, a wedding that never takes place, is a dismal fantasy world. John Cunningham argues that the wedding feast is a “parody of the New Testament figure of the eternal marriage feast; but she and her surroundings are a true emblem of the hellish eternity of separation from the lover” (87). The hellishness of Miss Havisham’s rooms is not caused by a separation from her lover, but from the negation of her lover and the revelation that all the symbols of love in Satis House are merely grotesque tokens of something that never existed in the first place—signs that represent lack by their inability to display conventional love. Gribble asserts, “Miss Havisham’s vision is almost accomplished. Force of will and inflexibility of purpose have made her world a place which perpetuates the decline of hope and comfort into stagnation and

decay” (128). Of all the characters that Pip imagines in this natural and symbolic world of spiders, mice, and black beetles, the black beetles seem most accurately to present Miss Havisham’s life. Just as they grope “about the hearth in a ponderous elderly way, as if they were short-sighted and hard of hearing,” so to does the witch-like, inhuman Miss Havisham move about her house slowly and with incredibly short sight, having restricted herself to the confines of rooms that hold remnants of her humiliation.

Miss Havisham then gives a prediction:

“This,” said she, pointing to the long table with her stick, “is where I will be laid when I am dead. They shall come and look at me here.”

With some vague misgiving that she might get upon the table then and there and die at once, the complete realization of the ghastly waxwork at the Fair, I shrank under her touch. (85)

Pip may not know who “they” are, but Miss Havisham knows that “they” are downstairs and that her relatives will come to scavenge what they can of her fortune when she is dead. She has set up for them a gruesome ritual, which includes their obligatory viewing of her body on the great table. Tables may have been a good way to display a body because of their strength and size. However, Miss Havisham’s unmistakable desire to force her relatives to see her body as a type of feast is seen in her establishing the seating arrangements. She knows who will sit in what chair as surely as if there are place cards and there is to be a party.

Pip is uncertain what to do, when

leaning on me while her hand twitched my shoulder, [Miss Havisham speaks,] “Come, come, come! Walk me, walk me!”

I made out from this, that the work I had to do, was to walk Miss Havisham round and round the room. Accordingly, I started at once, and she leaned upon my shoulder, and we went away at a pace that might have been an imitation (founded on my first impulse under that roof) of Mr. Pumblechook’s chaise-cart.

She was not physically strong, and after a little time said, “Slower!” Still, we went at an impatient fitful speed, and as we went, she twitched the hand upon my shoulder, and worked her mouth, and led me to believe that we were going fast because her thoughts went fast. After a while she said, “Call Estella!” so I went out on the landing and roared that name as I had done on the previous occasion. When her light appeared, I returned to Miss Havisham, and we started away again round and round the room. (85)

Aside from learning that her lovesickness has led her to keep less than sanitary living quarters, Pip continues to learn about Miss Havisham’s character. Her eyes are no less weapons in this scene than in her first meeting with Pip. She looks around the room of what should have been her wedding feast, and she does so not with dismay, but “in a glaring manner” (85). She repeats her initial directions to Pip three times, as if she is tired of waiting. Even after they have slowed down, Pip records “an impatient, fitful speed,” a twitching hand and mouth, and a belief that she is lost in rapid thought. Most

of her commands in this passage are punctuated with exclamation points after them, which express her urgency and impatience.

As a woman whose heart is broken, Miss Havisham should have the identity issues that come with being bereft of value. However, unlike Marianne and Ruth, who lose out in love because of intrigues surrounding money and social status, Miss Havisham can never be emptied of value because she is an heiress, and she will never cease to have relatives who are poorer than she. When they visit, they reveal their personal greed through a thin veneer of concern.

“Dear Miss Havisham,” said Miss Sarah Pocket. “How well you look!”

“I do not,” returned Miss Havisham. “I am yellow skin and bone.”

(86)

To Sarah Pocket, Miss Havisham refuses to deny her poor physical condition. Her relatives may lie to her about her looks to ingratiate and make themselves valuable to her, but she refuses to be pandered to. She does not allow anyone to attribute her worth to beauty, and she repels semi-affectionate white lies with a reliance upon her obvious ugliness and bodily ill-health to protect her from believing that her relatives value her for herself or an external trait like physical beauty and not just for her money. Her hermitage has affected her body, and she displays the wasting of her life to the only people who are allowed to visit her socially—the relatives who are parasitically awaiting her death in the hopes of receiving an inheritance. She relies on her wealth to provide relationships with others, and then resents those others for accepting her own commodification of herself,

relishing their discomfort with her presentation of herself as past medical help and resentful of familial or emotional attention. By refusing to accept affection, she can control her value to her dependents; they are there to try to win her favor and portions of her wealth. She makes it as clear as possible that she understands this to be the case, refutes the idea that she has any personal attractions to make people desire her company, and by refusing friendship to anyone, ensures that the only people who visit her work for her or are connivers, who put up with her rendering them ridiculous in the hopes of financial gain.

Unlike Sarah Pocket, who pretends Miss Havisham looks better than she does, Camilla revels in Miss Havisham's ill health and misery and expounds upon her own imagined ill health in transparent, lovesick sympathy pains that she hopes will render herself a kindred spirit to Miss Havisham. Camilla uses the same conventional understanding of the connection between a lady's emotional state and her physical one that has benefited Miss Havisham in order to prove her true, deep love of Miss Havisham:

“Poor dear soul! Certainly not to be expected to look well, poor thing.
The idea!”

“And how are *you*?” said Miss Havisham to Camilla. As we were close to Camilla then, I would have stopped as a matter of course, only Miss Havisham wouldn't stop. We swept on, and I felt that I was highly obnoxious to Camilla.

“Thank you, Miss Havisham,” she returned, “I am as well as can be expected.”

“Why, what’s the matter with you?” asked Miss Havisham, with exceeding sharpness.

“Nothing worth mentioning,” replied Camilla. “I don’t wish to make a display of my feelings, but I have habitually thought of you more in the night than I am quite equal to.”

“Then don’t think of me,” retorted Miss Havisham.

“Very easily said!” remarked Camilla, amiably repressing a sob, while a hitch came into her upper lip, and her tears overflowed.

“Raymond is a witness what ginger and sal volatile I am obliged to take in the night. Raymond is a witness what nervous jerkings I have in my legs. Chokings and nervous jerkings, however, are nothing new to me when I think with anxiety of those I love. If I could be less affectionate and sensitive, I should have a better digestion and an iron set of nerves. I am sure I wish it could be so. But as to not thinking of you in the night – The idea!” Here, a burst of tears. (86)

Unlike a father’s sympathy pains during his wife’s pregnancy, Camilla’s hysterical, sympathetic lovesickness is obviously disingenuous, yet after the initial prosaic advice that Camilla shouldn’t think of her, Miss Havisham allows her to declare as many of her silly health claims as she wishes, allowing her to look foolish. Miss Havisham’s

mockery of a blatant hypochondriac makes her own unrelieved staging of her lovesickness look disciplined by comparison.

Camilla enters into the competition for Miss Havisham's affection using a social understanding of female illness as the result of emotional distress, and Raymond, or Mr. Camilla, supports her claims as he compliments her ruining her health for pointless worry. His indigestion and sleep are not bothered by Miss Havisham's pain, but he honors the lady whose are.

He came to the rescue at this point, and said in a conciliatory and complimentary voice, "Camilla, my dear, it is well known that your family feelings are gradually undermining you to the extent of making one of your legs shorter than the other."

"I am not aware," observed the grave lady whose voice I had heard but once, "that to think of any person is to make a great claim upon that person, my dear." (86-7)

The grave lady makes an interesting point here. If to think of a person is not to make a claim on that person, then she is rendering Camilla's claim that she is the most attached relative to Miss Havisham obsolete by underscoring that Camilla's presentations of hysteria do not give her a greater claim to Miss Havisham (read: Miss Havisham's money) than any of the other relatives. This again is unusual with the lovesickness texts I have discussed. In them, all of the lovesick women have only been reclaimed to life and health by the renewal of love from the original lover, a new lover, or a divine or maternal love. Miss Havisham is not valued or mourned by her original lover, familial

love is non-existent for her here, and except for the presence of her prayer-book, there is no implication that she has a relationship with the church or God. In a paradigm in which Miss Havisham is emptied of personal value by her jilting and in which she presents herself as without value, she has relatives who visit and degrade themselves and each other to fight over her affections—affections that Miss Havisham signals to be absent through her perpetual portrayal of loss. These relatives are fighting to usurp her value but are not fighting to value her, and she is very aware of this fact.

Miss Havisham allows her relatives to argue with each other, knowing that their professed feelings for her are a sham, but she does not let their pretense go unnoticed for long. They mention Matthew disparagingly. While the reader does not know who Matthew is, it is apparent that Miss Havisham has an emotional response to his being mentioned, for she stops walking, looks at them, ends their conversation, calls them out as opportunists, and commands them to leave.

“Matthew will come and see me at last,” said Miss Havisham, sternly,
 “when I am laid on that table. That will be his place – there,” striking the
 table with her stick, “at my head! And yours will be there! And your
 husband’s there! And Sarah Pocket’s there! And Georgiana’s there! Now
 you all know where to take your stations when you come to feast upon
 me. And now go!” (88)

Miss Havisham knows that she is money to these people, which is why they will “feast” upon her when her death causes the reading of her will. Pip’s initial understanding of Miss Havisham as being afraid of robbers makes a perverse sense in these scenes with

her relatives, who want to be needed by her so that they may earn a reward. The irony of Pip's understanding Miss Havisham to have barricaded herself against robbers is that she has created a hermitage in which the only people who may enter are the ones who most wish to take her possessions. As Camilla leaves, she invokes references to cannibalism, which prove that she understands Miss Havisham's imagery at the same time that she artfully (or stupidly) asserts that she misses the intended meaning: "I am determined not to make a display of my feelings, but it's very hard to be told one wants to feast on one's relations – as if one was a Giant – and to be told to go" (88). Camilla insists upon reading Miss Havisham's comments literally so that she can be offended by them. By insisting Miss Havisham's comments are directed towards cannibalism and that her own feelings are hurt by having been called brutish, she keeps the conversation carefully away from her obvious greed.

When Austen's Marianne refuses to eat or take comfort in her lovesickness, her sister Elinor begs Marianne to think of others and not to kill her and their mother with grief over Marianne's death. Unlike Elinor Dashwood's rhetorical cure for Marianne's initial performances of lovesickness, which casts Elinor and her mother as suitors to Marianne's intrinsically valuable self, Miss Havisham's relatives are not good rhetoricians, and in focusing on Miss Havisham's health, they end up reinforcing that they value Miss Havisham for her wealth just as her fiancé did. Sarah Pocket's attempt to divorce Miss Havisham from her lovesickness, claiming that Miss Havisham looks well, is rebuffed by Miss Havisham's self-asserted ugliness and her refusal to stand still, look at Sarah, or engage her in conversation as an equal, instead perpetually circling the

room with the assistance of a cane and a small boy. Miss Havisham does not tolerate Camilla's attempt to participate in lovesickness through performances of sympathetic lovesickness because Miss Havisham is too aware of the self-interest involved in perpetrating a symptomatic identity to believe that Camilla is naturally affected by a deep emotion for her. The reader knows that Miss Havisham's relatives are snake-oil salesmen and that there is something wrong with this whole exchange. After the detailed contrasts of Miss Havisham's corpse-like appearance with Estella's youthful beauty, no reader will be duped into thinking that Miss Havisham is looking "well." The ridiculousness of Camilla's claims and Miss Havisham's obvious disdain for them ("then don't think of me") make it impossible for the reader not to see that female illness can be used to manipulate others. Miss Havisham's not believing Camilla and speaking to her as if she is in control of her emotions assures the reader of Camilla's falsehood.

The elaborate staging of Miss Havisham's lovesickness, the obsessive replacement of the artifacts of her love, and the insight into other women's manipulative claims to ill health give the reader an uneasy idea of just how in control of her environment Miss Havisham is. As a lovesick woman, Miss Havisham should require care, should rely upon those willing to provide it for her as Austen's Marianne and Gaskell's Ruth do. Marianne and Ruth are always dependent upon others for their support, even though Ruth does eventually contribute to her keep. Both of these heroines' reliance upon charity informs the nature of the lovesick relationship, which is one in which a defenseless, yet noble-souled lady (her innate femininity revealed through her need to waste, diminish, and lose her voice in the novel) gains reader

sympathy through her gentle acceptance of charity. While Austen altered this paradigm by writing Marianne as self-aware of her need to present a lovesick social face to the world without concern for or gratitude to those who care for her, Dickens alters it still more radically by placing Miss Havisham both outside a need for charity and resistant to the aid of others, refusing to be beholden to anyone. She has her fortune, and she maintains a relationship with others by making or keeping them dependent upon herself, performing the behaviors of the lovesick woman while refusing to accept the dependency on others that is implied by her performance.

As Miss Havisham is obsessively in control of her life, she attempts to control her death as well. Miss Havisham explains to Pip that her visitors always come on her birthday, but she refuses to have her birthday mentioned. She then explains the dual significance of the day to her:

“On this day of the year, long before you were born, this heap of decay,” stabbing with her crutched stick at the pile of cobwebs on the table but not touching it, “was brought here. It and I have worn away together. The mice have gnawed at it, and sharper teeth than teeth of mice have gnawed at me” (89). As Miss Havisham obviously chose to conflate the day of her birth with the day of her assumption of a new identity as a wife, so too does she now read her death as beginning from the moment she learned that her lover jilted her, for she pictures herself as having decayed with the cake although “sharper teeth” have worn her down—humiliation, self-reproach, and bitterness have taken a toll on her.

The rest of her life she labels a “ruin,” as she predicts her death to Pip; “When the ruin is complete,” said she, with a ghastly look, “and when they lay me dead, and which will be the finished curse upon him – so much the better if it is done on this day!” (89). This is Miss Havisham’s first mention of the man who jilted her. Her mention of him is noticeably without loss and longing, and she denies him even a name. Instead of trying to remember her lover as he was the last time she saw him, keeping a miniature or a lock of hair, she memorializes herself as she was in her ultimate rejection and makes sure that everyone else remembers when her life was wrecked. Desiring to read her death as the final “curse” on the man who jilted her on her wedding day, she must read her death as the direct result of her having been jilted. This desire to control the narrative of her death is complicated by her abnormally strong constitution.⁵² Her inability to die from lovesickness results in a desire that she die on her birthday, symbolically linking her birthday and her wedding day with her death, so that the world will blame her lover for her death. In case she does not die on her birthday, however, she continually performs lovesickness, so that even an arbitrary death can assume the causal relationship with the moment of her greatest humiliation: the day she discovers that she is not who she thinks she is and the married woman she was about to be is simply aborted. Stewart Justman asserts, “That she pursues revenge as a long-term project—that she seeks a distant end through calculated means in some crazed parody of civilized behavior—makes her project all the more grotesque” (88).⁵³ Her long-term project may not be satisfying, but it is essential to her ultimate goal of crafting herself as the victim of emotional trauma and the man who jilted her as a villain.

Pip's reaction to Miss Havisham's storytelling is worthy of note: "She stood looking at the table as if she stood looking at her own figure lying there. I remained quiet. Estella returned, and she too remained quiet. It seemed to me that we continued thus for a long time. In the heavy air of the room, and the heavy darkness that brooded in its remoter corners, I even had an alarming fancy that Estella and I might presently begin to decay" (89). The powerful effect of this morbid perpetuation of loss is seen in the "heavy" air and darkness of the room and in the effects of that darkness upon Pip, who begins to fear the contagion of lovesickness and his own decay.⁵⁴ Miss Havisham's life – the life of the woman participating in the lovesickness tradition – is a symbolic decay from the moment of her jilting to her death. The effect of the lovesick woman on the male spectator is a Jaffean sympathy, in which he is less concerned with the misery of the spectacle than he is worried about himself because he imagines himself in her place (6). Jaffe connects Victorian sympathy with a middle-class anxiety that sympathizes with the lower-class object of pity in the realization that in an unstable market economy, the classes can switch places with ease (8). Here, the upper middle-class Miss Havisham elicits pity from the working-class Pip by destabilizing his sense of his health. Pip, who we know is an active and healthy boy (partly because Pip has grown up in a rough-and-tumble existence despite his sister's wishing that he would sicken, die, and relieve her of him as a burden and partly because Pip fights the pale young gentlemen with no clue as to his own strength), is made to question his healthiness and to consider the possibility of his own decay by the presentation of symptoms of mild ill health and the fixation on

decay in an otherwise healthy woman. Sympathy places the observer of lovesickness in a position to imagine himself as decaying and unvalued as well.

Miss Havisham ceases to have the feelings requisite to a tale of lost love. She is not actively feeling hurt, sorrow, or continual longing for that which she has lost. Her cursing the man who jilted her and her desire for revenge against the entire male sex are real departures from the lovesickness tradition that we have seen. Marianne and Ruth both forgive the men who betray them, Marianne acknowledging that money is as valid a reason for marriage as love and Ruth sacrificing her health and a future with her son for the chance to nurse to health the man who never understands her value. Miss Havisham's desire for revenge manifests the end of her love, yet it is also the cause of her clinging to the identity of a lovesick woman, turning lovesickness into a technology of herself. Miss Havisham performs lovesickness, not to be seen by her social equals, who are never admitted to her home, but to fulfill a curse on the man who jilted her. She may achieve a certain status in her participation in lovesickness during her life, but her goal is to have her death read as the natural conclusion of deception and lost love. She wishes to be seen not on every birthday, when her relatives visit, but laid out on a fantastically moldy table at her death. Her life then assumes the theatricality of her one grand masque—the presentation of the dead bride, heartbroken and alone, withered and old, the old woman who had no life after her love was denied. Stewart Justman writes, “Among the worst distortions of the other we must place the practice of blaming others as though they were the authors of one's own deeds, even the makers of one's self” (79).

The reader learns of Miss Havisham's lovesickness from what Miss Havisham tells a child and from how she treats her relatives. Dickens does, however, insert into the text a more impartial telling of Miss Havisham's love story. Herbert Pocket, the son of the mysterious Matthew whose mention ended the visit from Miss Havisham's relatives, reveals to Pip that Miss Havisham was betrayed by her lover and her half-brother for her money. Herbert's father, Matthew, has told him Miss Havisham's story; "...Miss Havisham, you must know, was a spoilt child. Her mother died when she was a baby, and her father denied her nothing" (179-80). Miss Havisham was not spoiled out of a misplaced mourning for her mother. She was spoiled as a matter of class; "Mr. Havisham was very rich and very proud. So was his daughter" (180). Herbert reveals that Miss Havisham "had a half-brother. Her father privately married again – his cook, I rather think" and that "He married his second wife privately, because he was proud, and in course of time *she* died. When she was dead, I apprehend he first told his daughter what he had done, and then the son became a part of the family, residing in the house you are acquainted with" (180). Herbert tells here how proud Miss Havisham was raised to be and how little control she had over whom she was related to. While no one has control over who one's father marries, that he married in secret to perpetuate his and Miss Havisham's sense of superiority yet accepted his son into the home from which he excluded his second wife explains the tricky nature of her relationships with others. Her father's inconsistencies help explain Miss Havisham's ability to squash to insignificance the sense of self-worth found in her relatives and Pip and her willingness to raise the adopted Estella to pridefulness.

Mr. Havisham instills plenty of the family pride into his son as well, who “turned out riotous, extravagant, undutiful – altogether bad. At last his father disinherited him; but he softened when he was dying and left him well off, though not nearly so well off as Miss Havisham” (180). It is unclear from Herbert’s second-hand tale, whether or not Miss Havisham and her half-brother were friendly before the death of their father, but upon Mr. Havisham’s leaving inequitable funds to his children, a dislike was solidified.

Miss Havisham was now an heiress, and you may suppose was looked after as a great match. Her half-brother had now ample means again, but what with debts and what with new madness wasted them most fearfully again. There were stronger differences between him and her, than there had been between him and his father, and it is suspected that he cherished a deep and mortal grudge against her, as having influenced the father’s anger. (180)

Herbert names the next part of his recital of Miss Havisham’s life the “cruel part of the story” (180) in which “There appeared upon the scene – say at the races, or the public balls, or anywhere you like – a certain man, who made love to Miss Havisham” (181). Not only does Herbert continue to discuss Miss Havisham’s life as if it were narrative, but he feels a need to fill in the gaps in his knowledge with scenery, and he tells Pip to set the stage for the unfolding drama however he chooses, to pick a scene “anywhere you like.” The defining moment in Miss Havisham’s life is arguably the jilting that she will not cease to perform, and her excessive performance of a femininity that is responsive to lost love is grotesque. That a woman would choose to define her life

according to a literary standard, reading herself according to how her life tells a story for others, even when her own healthy constitution belies the narrative she is trying to craft, is grotesque but is not entirely far-fetched. Even Herbert, one of Miss Havisham's few honorable relatives, presents her life as a story that may be appropriated for presentation to others for their entertainment and bonding and shaped and edited however that male audience desires.

Herbert continues to narrate Miss Havisham's life, and he tells of her falling in love with a man's performance of gentlemanly courtship. Herbert describes Miss Havisham's suitor in less than complimentary terms. As he recounts his father's opinion of the man, Herbert also establishes his father's definition of a gentleman:

I have heard my father mention that he was a showy-man, and the kind of man for the purpose. But that he was not to be, without ignorance or prejudice, mistaken for a gentleman, my father most strongly asseverates; because it is a principle of his that no man who was not a true gentleman at heart, ever was, since the world began, a true gentleman in manner. He says, no varnish can hide the grain of the wood; and that the more varnish you put on, the more the grain will express itself.

If a true gentleman at heart is the only true gentleman in manner and only ignorance or prejudice would assess a showy-man as a gentleman, then Miss Havisham's own gentility is once again questioned by her inability to see the "grain" of her suitor. While the grown-up Pip narrates this tale and constantly questions the possibility of a blacksmith's boy turning into a gentleman, it is his exposure to Miss Havisham and

Estella that causes his desire to be a gentleman, but also causes the most doubt about whether or not he is succeeding. However, the fact that Matthew Pocket questions Miss Havisham's ability to recognize a gentleman, and more probably her ability to be a lady, reiterates how unstable class is in this novel. As Matthew declares that it is impossible to misread a man's class, he adds that "ignorance or prejudice" can cause people to be deceived, stressing that it is in the performance of class (that is somehow not "showy") that one can see the innate character of a man, but that one can mistake show for grain.

Herbert continues the "story" to tell Pip the very conventional part of the tale. Miss Havisham is a proper lady in the sense that she is the recipient of advances that cause her love, which is responsive to her suitor's initial show of love; "This man pursued Miss Havisham closely, and professed to be devoted to her. I believe she had not shown much susceptibility up to that time; but all she possessed, certainly came out then, and she passionately loved him. There is no doubt that she perfectly idolised him" (181). Miss Havisham's exhibition of responsive love is conventional and appropriate, but her idolization of her suitor explains why she will later be unable to turn her affections to a new recipient and move on with her life. Finally, we come to the crux of the story. Herbert reveals how Miss Havisham was wrong and therefore wronged in her relationship with her suitor; "He practised on her affection in that systematic way, that he got great sums of money from her, and he induced her to buy her brother out of a share in the brewery (which had been weakly left him by his father) at an immense price, on the plea that when he was her husband he must hold and manage it all" (181). Her suitor uses the claims of a husband to appropriate her wealth and to direct its spending.

Perhaps because her father was a brewer and maintained his gentlemanly status upon the production of beer, she was comfortable with a suitor desiring to establish his showy presence in her hometown in the same manner. Of course, her idolization of her suitor is further established by her ability to sacrifice a large sum of money on a poor business deal in order to please his whim.

Herbert then explains how Miss Havisham could come to make such a poor decision about her choice of suitor and about her personal finances. He explains that Mr. Jaggers

was not at that time in Miss Havisham's councils, and she was too haughty and too much in love to be advised by any one. Her relations were poor and scheming, with the exception of my father; he was poor enough, but not time-serving or jealous. The only independent one among them, he warned her that she was doing too much for this man, and was placing herself too unreservedly in his power. (181)

That Miss Havisham was too much in love is expressed in her idolization of her suitor, but her haughtiness is an interesting excuse for giving one's possessions over to the management of another. Here, her haughtiness, compounded by the "poor and scheming" relations, toward whom she has a right to feel superior, is related to her inability to recognize that her perceptions of class are faulty. It is impossible for her to believe that she, who is wealthy and class-conscious, could be a poorer judge of class than the poor Matthew Pocket. His warnings to Miss Havisham are based upon the nature of her relationship with her suitor. Matthew may not think that her suitor is a man

of quality grain, but he does not attack his innate worth to Miss Havisham; instead he tries to school her on appropriate courtship power relations. Matthew wants Miss Havisham to have more control over her possessions and more power in her relationship with her suitor until they are married; he recognizes that her mistake is performing nineteenth-century gender relations too strictly when she has no male protector to even the playing field and protect her person and possessions from the advances of confidence men. Miss Havisham is very much in the position of Elinor and Marianne Dashwood and Ruth Hilton in that, as other nineteenth-century heroines set up to contract lovesickness, she has no protector and is forced to make a choice between competing ideologies of conduct. Should she choose the ideology Robert Polhemus has called erotic faith that she is completed by her suitor, and as such, is only valuable in how she can contribute to his value? Or should she go against the teachings of romantic texts that display femininity and instead learn the masculine role of protecting herself and her money from others?

Miss Havisham chooses to perform erotic faith. Herbert tells how she takes “the first opportunity of angrily ordering my father out of her house” (181) and how “she charged him, in the presence of her intended husband, with being disappointed in the hope of fawning upon her for his own advancement” (182). Miss Havisham’s performance of love demands that her suitor be the only person who can see her intrinsic value, which causes her to believe that others see her as valuable for her wealth alone. She refuses to acknowledge that Matthew might have a non-mercenary reason for caring for her. The impact of this devaluation of oneself in the eyes of everyone but one’s suitor as if guarding one’s value exclusively for that person is disastrous, as Miss Havisham’s

hermitage suggests. Not only will Miss Havisham not re-enter society and try to re-establish positive relationships with others, but Matthew's choices are also restricted, as Herbert notes, "if he were to go to her now, it [that Matthew was fawning upon her for his own advancement] would look true – even to him – and even to her" (182). Miss Havisham's understanding of herself as valuable only because of her wealth, which is cruelly underscored by her suitor, is a hindrance to her personal relationships.

Herbert tells the climax of the story, the story of Miss Havisham's wedding day, as the day in which her character was fully formed, her identity fixed in a position of loss, waiting, and uncertainty instead of completion by a masculine counterpart as she had expected.

"The marriage day was fixed, the wedding dresses were bought, the wedding tour was planned out, the wedding guests were invited. The day came, but not the bride-groom. He wrote her a letter –"

"Which she received," I struck in, "when she was dressing for her marriage? At twenty minutes to nine?"

"At the hour and minute," said Herbert, nodding, "at which she afterwards stopped all the clocks." (182)

Pip cuts off Herbert's recantation of the story to participate in the telling himself. He "struck in" the conversation; his asserting himself into Miss Havisham's story is a type of violence. His questions are less questions than the excited utterance of the detective who has just solved a mystery. They are really answers to the questions that he has had since he was a child and was unsure what Miss Havisham's performance was really

about. Cunningham adds, “Too late Satis House is barred against robbers.

Unsuspectedly, the thief came; the day also came, but the bridegroom did not. Miss Havisham did not properly watch; later she watches in vain” (88). Feminine identity is associated with love and a wedding. While Miss Havisham is denied her bridegroom, she is granted a fixed character, one who is perpetually waiting.

Herbert reimposes himself as the narrator of the story, acknowledging the limits of his knowledge, for in speaking of her suitor’s letter to her, he reveals, “What was in it, further than that it most heartlessly broke the marriage off, I can’t tell you, because I don’t know” (182). The contents of that letter are never revealed in the text. This emphasizes that Miss Havisham’s actual relationship with her suitor and their words to each other are far less important than the effect of being engaged, planning a wedding, being jilted, and having a good portion of her fortune stolen are on Miss Havisham’s character. Herbert tells Pip the only direct statement of Miss Havisham’s physical lovesickness, when he says, “When she recovered from a bad illness that she had, she laid the whole place waste, as you have seen it, and she has never since looked upon the light of day” (182). Somehow, although Miss Havisham is jilted and has “a bad illness” that leaves her a weak and partial invalid, relying upon her performance of herself as lovesick to establish or maintain all further relationships with those about her, the nature of this illness is entirely obscured in the text. Dickens subordinates the physical aspects of her illness to her “showy” adaptations of lovesickness in her life. He renders her much less pitiable by refusing to grant Miss Havisham pages of the novel in which to voice her own story, and even amongst her relatives’ retellings of it, the depiction of her being

leveled by physical illness and deserving or requiring care is diminished. Dickens alters conventional lovesickness by refusing to focus on the lovesick lady's innocence, weakness, sadness, pining, and dependence upon others, instead presenting her contraction of lovesickness as an effect of a tragic flaw and focusing on Miss Havisham's strength in laying "the whole place waste" and in her anger, vengeance, and self-sufficiency.

Herbert ends his tale with speculations as to the motives of the individuals involved; the fact that Miss Havisham's suitor performed love to control and trick her may explain the dark spectacle of her future lovesickness.

"It has been supposed that the man to whom she gave her misplaced confidence, acted throughout in concert with her half-brother; that it was a conspiracy between them; and that they shared the profits."

"I wonder he didn't marry her and get all the property," said I.

"He may have been married already, and her cruel mortification may have been a part of her half-brother's scheme," said Herbert. "Mind! I don't know that." (182)

And thus Miss Havisham is reborn as a lovesick woman, which in most scenarios in the nineteenth century means a woman who has been emptied of value. Her story, as are most stories of female love and loss in the nineteenth-century, is complicated: she is valuable in the eyes of her lover, but she is valuable for her father's property and possessions, not for her own self. Paul Sheehan writes, "Her entire plight, in fact—broken-hearted and obsessed with vengeance—can be traced to the formation of a

‘money relation,’ her courtship by the confidence trickster Compeyson. Unlike other relations, this one, founded on deceit, is poisoned before it has even begun” (100). Not only does her betrayal mean that she is no longer loved, it also means that she reads herself as having never been loved by the man she hoped to marry. Unlike Marianne Dashwood, who lives to marry another man after hearing about Willoughby’s visit and confession to Elinor at the Palmer’s home and after believing that although Willoughby chose to betray her faith in him and marry another for money, he still loves her, Miss Havisham’s brother sets up this scheme to ensure that she learns just how unloved she is. Arthur and Compeyson could have run away with Miss Havisham’s money and never told her what happened. The Miss Havisham who waited, not knowing what had become of her lover on their wedding day, may have been a softer, more conventional lovesick lady, but Dickens’s Miss Havisham gets a letter that explains to her why she is not to be a bride, and Herbert suspects that its purpose is “cruel mortification.” Marianne Dashwood continues to be loved by the man who jilts her, Ruth Hilton continues to be desirable to the man who jilts her, but Miss Havisham must always remember herself as entirely unvalued by the only man she ever loves.

Having value, however, as even an heiress who has been financially taken advantage of does, Miss Havisham is perhaps the oddest woman in literature. Instead of a story of lost love to explain her singleness, she is an old maid with a story of familial and financial betrayal and a desire for revenge. Her love was responsive to Compeyson’s lies, causing her to see herself as valuable and everyone but Compeyson as being incapable of seeing her intrinsic worth because they were blinded by her possessions.

The type of value that Miss Havisham pretends to have lost is the type of value that she desires, to be loved for one's intrinsic value. While she never really loses that type of love because she never had it, losing the belief that Compeyson loves her in that way has wreaked as much of a difference on her person and her life as if she has. Actually, by enacting a social code that is informed by the language and literature of love even though it does not pertain to her, Miss Havisham is participating in a tradition that does not fit in order to underscore the lie of it all. The grotesqueness of her performance of lovesickness is seen in the fact that she scrupulously fulfills the role of the lovesick woman at the same time that she does not love or feel loss, she feels betrayal and a desire for revenge. She enacts a grotesque lovesickness as the necessary means of performing the end of a grotesquely betraying love.

Her performance is not only calculated but is also what the nineteenth-century taught to be the female response to love. A woman loves in response to the love of a man and prepares to place herself in his power as his wife. Women with no male protection could not go from the protected space of their family to the protected space of their husband's home. Women without male protection were expected to have powers of discernment that were encouraged in theory,⁵⁵ but which they would have had little ability to practice. After she is jilted, Miss Havisham makes of her behavior, her faith in the man who professes love, and her willingness to respond to that love with acts of faith and proof, a virtue. She defines love as a form of idol worship, "I'll tell you, said she, in the same hurried passionate whisper, "what real love is. It is blind devotion, unquestioning self-humiliation, utter submission, trust and belief against yourself and

against the whole world, giving up your whole heart and soul to the smiter – as I did!” (240). She uses the language of religion: “devotion,” “submission,” “trust,” and “belief” to define the relationship that a good lover should have with the object of its affection. However, she defines this type of love not to Estella, but to Pip. Pip is impressed by the violence of her “showy” declaration that he reads as entirely forthright; “When she came to that, and to a wild cry that followed that, I caught her round the waist. For she rose up in the chair, in her shroud of a dress, and struck at the air as if she would as soon have struck herself against the wall and fallen dead” (240). Many critics focus on a perceived passivity in Pip, and reading this passage, French asserts that Miss Havisham “is casting Pip in the role of victim, confirming him in the part he has always played” (154); however, Miss Havisham is not calling for Pip’s passivity. She is calling for his observance of a Petrarchan fantasy, and the quest she assigns him is for him to love Estella. As Estella rejects him, Miss Havisham calls upon Pip to love her all the more. The romance tales behind this direction/curse of Miss Havisham’s belie the beauty, and thus the power, of writing oneself into the plotting of a romance. That Pip accepts the romantic vision of his life from a lady whose story does not end well also proves the power of the lovesick tale. Its intensity and impact on those around the lovesick person who don’t have clear identities is impressive. Pip accepts Miss Havisham’s depiction of love as an erotic faith, but he also accepts her advice to set up his shrine before a lesser goddess. Indeed, what Miss Havisham has proven sufficiently to Pip is that the lesser the object of worship, the greater the powers and faith of the worshipper – the lesser the object of affection, the greater the lover. While Miss Havisham teaches Estella to be a

poor lover to protect herself from being hurt, she is teaching Pip to understand love as a way to value oneself in performance of a masochistic tradition of love and service, rendering the approval of the object of worship obsolete, impotent to affect his self-esteem.

That Tinge of Resemblance

In Gaskell's *Ruth* a lovesick mother passes on elements of her lovesickness to her son. Dickens's *Great Expectations* also presents a lovesick mother and her child, but instead of a beautiful, lovesick, unwed single mother of a son, Dickens creates an ugly, lovesick, virgin mother with a beautiful and cruel adopted daughter. As previously discussed, Pip notices a resemblance between Dickens's Miss Havisham and Estella, yet he cannot determine what manner of likeness they share. Pip is struck by the resemblance at the moment that he and Estella discuss the relationship between one's physical heart and one's emotional capacity. Pip's insistence upon a resemblance between Miss Havisham and Estella when he cannot determine a single look or trait that is similar is the reader's only hint to understanding the lovesick Miss Havisham and her loveless adopted daughter not as opposites. The "tinge of resemblance" that Pip sees between Estella and Miss Havisham is their aberrant relationship to romance and the marriage plot. As Miss Havisham is unable or unwilling to redirect her love, focusing all her energy upon her ability to curse her lover (and her half-brother) by her blighted life, her adopted daughter is unable or unwilling to direct her love at all. Estella must marry

and must sacrifice herself to a brute because she knows that she will not grow to love a husband after her marriage, being incapable of loving in a culturally prescribed way.

Estella's understanding that one's heart is in no way connected to one's feelings is a lesson that she learns over many years' time. Estella is the class-conscious daughter of Miss Havisham. Her learning and performance of class is a sign of Miss Havisham's great preoccupation with class. Pip notices in his first visit that Estella is a "young lady, who was very pretty and seemed very proud" (55). Pip is aware of Miss Havisham's performance of class in his first visit, using Estella as an easel upon which to display wealth; "Miss Havisham beckoned to her to come close, and took up a jewel from the table, and tried its effect upon her fair young bosom and against her pretty brown hair. 'Your own, one day, my dear, and you will use it well'" (60). Pip is also very conscious of Estella's assumption of class in her responses to Miss Havisham's desire that she play cards with him:

"With this boy! Why, he is a common labouring-boy!"

I thought I heard Miss Havisham answer – only it seemed so unlikely – "Well? You can break his heart."

"What do you play, boy?" asked Estella of myself, with the greatest disdain.

"Nothing but beggar my neighbor, miss."

Beggar him," said Miss Havisham to Estella. So we sat down to cards. (60)

Estella is fixated on Pip's class instead of her own; however, while always encouraging Estella's attention to class, Miss Havisham also teaches Estella to be aware of gender. In the case of playing cards with a working-class boy, she acknowledges that his class value is minimal by her "Well?" at the same time that she posits his intrinsic value as a suitor by her presentation of Pip as a boy with a heart to be fixed and broken – a mannequin upon which Estella may learn. Estella does not seem entirely sold on this game, as she continues to talk to him "with the greatest disdain," and an entirely different behavior would be required from a seductress. In fact, in their early "friendship," Estella's entire focus is on how very unlike and incompatible she and Pip are.

"He calls the knaves, Jacks, this boy!" said Estella with disdain, before our first game was out. "And what coarse hands he has. And what thick boots!"

I had never thought of being ashamed of my hands before; but I began to consider them a very indifferent pair. Her contempt was so strong, that it became infectious, and I caught it. (60)

Contempt in this passage becomes a contagious disease of which Estella is a carrier. She is not lovesick herself, yet she spreads to Pip part of Miss Havisham's belief system that class is worthy of admiration and love. Sheehan writes, "For Pip, the two aspects of his inner disposition—class envy and carnal longing—eventually dovetail" (101). That Pip is able to perceive these two characteristics is obvious by his reaction to Miss Havisham's asking his opinion of Estella with the words "proud," "pretty," and

“insulting” (61). Pip’s self-contempt (caught from Estella) lays the foundation for his lovesickness.

As a child Estella performs all of the offices of hospitality that are required of her by Miss Havisham, but she makes her feelings of Pip’s inferiority known. On his first visit to Satis House, Pip reads Estella’s opinion of him in how she serves his lunch to him:

She came back, with some bread and meat and a little mug of beer. She put the mug down on the stones of the yard, and gave me the bread and meat without looking at me, as insolently as if I were a dog in disgrace. I was so humiliated, hurt, spurned, offended, angry, sorry – I cannot hit upon the right name for the smart – God knows what its name was – that tears started to my eyes. The moment they sprang there, the girl looked at me with a quick delight in having been the cause of them. This gave me power to keep them back and to look at her: so, she gave me a contemptuous toss – but with a sense, I thought, of having made too sure that I was so wounded – and left me. (62)

The young Estella performs her hostess duties with the most disdain possible. Pip unmistakably understands that she sees him as sub-human, which delights Estella. Knowing that infatuation and love can be a game, she is very powerful and can cause a pain that Pip is too young to understand. He does know enough to try to name it, and he uses “spurned” – a verb referring to rejected suit – as a synonym. Estella’s delight in the pain she causes is actually her weakness. Her “quick delight” in his tears gives Pip the

“power to keep them back and to look at her.” Her resultant “contemptuous toss” is performed with “a sense . . . of having made too sure that [Pip is] wounded.” She is very like Miss Havisham in her distrust of the attachments or claims that people make on her, and she is just as mean-spirited to Pip as Miss Havisham is to her relations. She seems to understand instinctively that Pip does want to assert a claim on her: now a claim of friendship, later a more possessive one. While she is contemptuous of Pip, Estella seems also critical of herself here. She realizes that she cedes power when she reveals her delight in his pain. She is contemptuous of her strong need to gloat about having caused pain, and she learns that masking her joy in hurting others could be even more painful to the recipient of her attack.

Estella’s delight in Pip’s pain causes contradictory reactions in him: first, he is empowered to hide his emotions and be stoic to thwart her delight, but his second reaction is to intensify the pain he feels, reveling in his misery.

But, when she was gone, I looked about me for a place to hide my face in, and got behind one of the gates in the brewery-lane, and leaned my sleeve against the wall there, and leaned my forehead on it and cried. As I cried, I kicked the wall, and took a hard twist at my hair; so bitter were my feelings, and so sharp was the smart without a name, that needed counteraction. (62)

Pip learns masochism from Estella. Physical pain “counteracts” the emotional pain that he does not even begin to understand. When Estella returns to let Pip out, she does so

with “a triumphant glance” (65), and she touches Pip with just as much contempt as she had exhibited when she earlier performed her hostess duties.

I was passing out without looking at her, when she touched me with a taunting hand.

“Why don’t you cry?”

“Because I don’t want to.”

“You do,” said she. “You have been crying till you are half blind, and you are near crying again now.”

She laughed contemptuously, pushed me out, and locked the gate upon me. (65)

Estella has learned that she cannot witness pain if she delights in it as she inflicts it because she triggers her victim’s pride and self-preservation. This seems to be a lesson that Estella learns well, and while she still externalizes her delight in causing pain, she does so after spying on Pip to have proof that he feels the hurt she intends to cause.

Pip’s next visit begins as badly as his first ended. Estella still has a “taunting manner” (82), and she questions him in the dark hallway while they are alone about the comments he made to Miss Havisham about her. Miss Havisham obviously discusses Pip’s remarks with her, and Estella seems offended both that Pip spoke about her and that he called her insulting. She slaps him, calls him a “little coarse monster” (82), and asks what he thinks of her now, daring him to call her insulting again. Pip replies:

“I shall not tell you.”

“Because you are going to tell, up-stairs. Is that it?”

“No,” said I, “that’s not it.”

“Why don’t you cry again, you little wretch?”

“Because I’ll never cry for you again,” said I. Which was, I suppose, as false a declaration as ever was made; for I was inwardly crying for her then, and I know what I know of the pain she cost me afterwards. (82)

Estella taunts him to cry as he did before, but this time she accuses him of being a tattletale. Estella, as many school bullies do, reveals in her taunt a fear of surveillance. She does not wish to be observed in her relationships with others. Even in these early passages, Estella seems cold and unaware of the others around her, but she is very aware of being seen and in this passage she reveals a fear of it. The rest of Pip’s visit with Miss Havisham repeats the prior humiliating card game, but Miss Havisham’s eyes, which are so capable of wounding, are seen to dwell on both the youngsters equally; “Miss Havisham watched us all the time, directed my attention to Estella’s beauty, and made me notice it the more by trying her jewels on Estella’s breast and hair” (90). While Miss Havisham watches both Estella and Pip, it is for different purposes, and Estella is being observed and regulated every bit as much as Pip is. Miss Havisham’s surveillance of Estella reinforces her understanding of Estella as a spectacle, a wounding vision.

Estella understands herself not only as a spectacle to be observed and regulated by Miss Havisham, but she also enjoys positioning herself as the observer and regulator of others’ behavior. Pip encounters the pale young gentleman on the grounds of Satis House and earns his first respite from Estella’s wounding treatment of him. After Pip

knocks down the pale young gentleman, he goes to the gate to leave and finds Estella looking

as though something had happened to delight her. Instead of going straight to the gate, too, she stepped back into the passage, and beckoned me.

“Come here! You may kiss me, if you like.”

I kissed her cheek as she turned it to me. I think I would have gone through a great deal to kiss her cheek. But, I felt that the kiss was given to the coarse common boy as a piece of money might have been, and that it was worth nothing. (93)

Pip understands Estella's allowing him to kiss her as payment. Just as Gaskell's Ruth rejects Mrs. Bellingham's fifty pounds that appraise her relationship with Bellingham as worth only an amount of money, so Pip does not want his love to be tarnished by Estella's voluntary assumption that kisses are the natural currency with which a woman repays services rendered. Pip may be willing to do a lot to kiss her cheek, but he wants that kiss to be romantic, embedded with emotion, instead of a perfunctory transaction. That Estella here is not trying to wound Pip makes her treatment of him, and his quick acceptance of her offered cheek, no less humiliating to him. At a young age, she can already gain power by using her body as a reward and as a punishment to a boy who finds her pretty. Estella's behavior to Pip remains capricious; “Estella was always about, and always let me in and out, but never told me I might kiss her again. Sometimes, she would coldly tolerate me; sometimes, she would condescend to me; sometimes, she

would be quite familiar with me; sometimes, she would tell me energetically that she hated me” (95). Estella seems to know that she is watched by Miss Havisham and watched by Pip. She accepts that others watch her, but she struggles with the loss of control that is implied in being a passive spectacle. She endures her adoptive mother petting her and calling others’ attention to her beauty, even though she disagrees with Miss Havisham’s forcing her to play with a laboring boy. Pip’s admiring gaze is too artless for her to learn from, so she uses his admiration to abuse him by forcing him to tell her that he thinks she is pretty and insulting so that she can later insult him still further with a passionless kiss.

Estella’s peers do not remember her youthful performance of femininity with admiration. After Pip is grown and hears Miss Havisham’s story from Herbert, he also hears Herbert call Estella a “Tartar” (176). Herbert also judges her rather harshly:

“That girl’s hard and haughty and capricious to the last degree, and has been brought up by Miss Havisham to wreak revenge on all the male sex.”

“What relation is she to Miss Havisham?”

“None,” said he. “Only adopted.” (177)

Pip is interested in what relation Estella holds to Miss Havisham, but Herbert’s reply that Estella is of no relation to Miss Havisham is misleading. Herbert speaks of Estella as if she were a tool or machine, “brought up” to fulfill Miss Havisham’s whims.⁵⁶ Gilchrist asserts, “Miss Havisham has relentlessly created a monster perhaps even more grotesque than she herself is” and “Under the shaping hand of Miss Havisham, Estella has become

inhuman” (77). Estella is not inhuman, but she is somewhat monstrous in this Dickens text. Estella is a girl whose adoptive mother refuses to let her know herself outside of the marriage plot. When Estella correctly asserts that Pip is not fit company for her because of their different stations, Miss Havisham insists upon her maintaining a relationship with him in order to break his heart. The careful surveillance and control that Miss Havisham has exerted upon Estella, Estella has learned to exert upon Pip; however, Estella’s moodiness around Pip and her propensity for abusing him reveal Estella’s conflict with the task Miss Havisham has given her. Estella is not seductive and charming; Pip even understands the kiss she allows him to give her as a payment, not a tease or a promise of more to come. Estella’s inconsistent and capricious behavior towards Pip proves that the young Estella is not a cold, calculating monster but a normal, willful child, who submits to her parent’s control only when she must. The reader is uncomfortable with Estella’s behavior because she actively thwarts Pip’s marriage plot, which renders her a monster in a Victorian novel. Estella’s problem is that she is not entirely submissive to the restraints and expectations Dickens has placed upon her by locating her in a story of lovesickness. The monstrosity here is the breaking, bending, shaping social norms that insist upon a beautiful, wealthy girl’s submission to the marriage plot. Estella is raised by Miss Havisham to be a symbol of wealth, beauty, and desirable, unattainable femininity, yet her anger and willfulness as a child speak to her resentment of those around her reading her into a twisted marriage plot.

As Herbert copes with Estella’s unique performance of femininity by labeling her a tartar, Pip copes with Estella’s resistance to romantic plotting with denial. He cannot

understand a woman devoid of “heart,” so he conflates her beauty, her affections, and her class. Estella is a rich and beautiful young woman, therefore she must be waiting to fall in love with the right suitor. But Estella reveals to Pip that she has no heart.

Interested in Dickens’s use of the grotesque, Gilchrist notes that “since Estella is placed in the role of Pip’s ‘lover’ in the novel, she comes to represent the passionless inversion of the natural lover, just as Miss Havisham is the morbidly inverted bride” (77). While she may be passionless in her maturity, Estella has developed a warmth for Pip. Estella’s declaration that she has no heart is not a triumphant boast or a challenge. She is not daring Pip to make her feel something romantic. She is not treating Pip as a suitor at all, and Pip acknowledges that “she already treated me more than enough like a boy” (236). Frost calls Estella “unusually adept at self-analysis” (14). As Estella and Pip discuss their childhoods at Satis House, having already declared herself a “singular little creature” (236) for having hidden to watch Pip fight Herbert, she seems unable to remember either that she kissed Pip after his fight with Herbert or that on Pip’s first day, he saw her walking upon old casks and she eventually made him cry. Pip’s confession to the reader at this point in the text is, “I verily believe that her not remembering and not minding in the least, made me cry again, inwardly – and that is the sharpest crying of all” (237). Pip’s inward crying must have had an outward sign, for this is the moment that Estella attempts to explain herself; “‘You must know,’ said Estella, condescending to me as a brilliant and beautiful woman might, ‘that I have no heart – if that has anything to do with my memory’” (237). Her condescension to Pip at the moment she sees his pain is a consideration of his feelings, but Estella takes this moment to explain

that she does not mean to hurt him by not remembering, but that she is not capable of taking other people's romantic feelings into consideration. The episode of the kiss in the garden is not romantic to Estella and wasn't romantic to Pip at the time, but he had wanted it to be and is recalling it to the grown Estella flirtatiously, which she will not countenance.

Pip tries to assert that her loveliness is a sign of emotional depth, but Estella refuses to accept that there is a correlation between emotional health and physical beauty, and Pip sees the thing he cannot understand, the "tinge of resemblance to Miss Havisham" (238) that makes no sense to him because Estella is so young, beautiful, and healthy. Estella is forceful and honest about her having no feelings:

"I am serious," said Estella, not so much with a frown (for her brow was smooth) as with a darkening of her face; "if we are to be thrown much together, you had better believe it at once. No!" imperiously stopping me as I opened my lips. "I have not bestowed my tenderness anywhere. I have never had any such thing."

...As my eyes followed her white hand, again the same dim suggestion that I could not possibly grasp, crossed me. . . . Instantly the ghost passed once more, and was gone. (238)

Estella's continued assertions of heartlessness are given in conjunction with an understanding that they "are to be thrown much together," but that he should not read her as the love interest in his story. Darby asserts, "Her reply acknowledges the conventional expectations of sentiment that burden the beautiful woman, while insisting,

first, on her right to express herself, and second, on the possibility of something better than conventional flirtation” (222). As Estella asserts that she has no heart, no “tenderness,” Pip is again reminded of something that he cannot figure out; that something is ghostly like Miss Havisham. Estella seems like Miss Havisham when she is least like a woman capable of being lovesick. Miss Havisham’s lovesickness has transferred to her adopted daughter in this text, but the lovesickness that Estella inherits is not a softening influence that yearns for love. Estella should have to be able to love before she can be lovesick, but the lovesickness in this text, the lovesickness with which Estella is raised, is the sickness of a life blighted by hate and desires for revenge, not a mournful lovesickness that yearns for lost love. Estella inherits the aberrant lovesickness that is caused by a deceptive, aberrant love story, and her lovesick inheritance does not serve to render her weaker, pining for a life that can never be. Instead, the infusion of Miss Havisham’s bitter lovesickness into her psyche actually vaccinates Estella’s body, rendering her too strong to contract love, the disease with which Dickens blights the main characters of this novel.

Estella eventually gives up on connecting with Pip, when she sees that he cannot grasp what she is telling him. Pip can only wonder what he is seeing:

What *was* it?

“What is the matter? Asked Estella. “Are you scared again?”

“I should be, if I believed what you said just now,” I replied, to
turn it off.

“Then you don’t? Very well. It is said, at any rate. Miss Havisham will soon be expecting you at your old post, though I think that might be laid aside now, with other old belongings. Let us make one more round of the garden, and then go in. Come! You shall not shed tears for my cruelty to-day; you shall be my Page, and give me your shoulder.” (238)

Pip teases Estella as a suitor would, claiming to be afraid only of her having no feelings, but meaning, of course, that he has no fear of the kind. As Gribble notes, “Estella thus recognizes that the shared, unnatural childhood has made her akin to Pip; she speaks to him with a warmth and intimacy she can feel for no one else. Pip’s reflections, given in the language of the spurned lover, are strikingly at odds with what we have just seen and felt in Estella” (134). With this warning, Estella absolves herself from any pain his disbelief causes him later, but then she enters into his pretence. Darby writes:

She will be the knight and he will be the page, but she is not going to avoid chivalry altogether; she just wants to reverse the roles. This encounter is typical of the adult Estella’s refusal to follow Miss Havisham’s script with Pip, of her lightly mocking tone as she articulates her own point of view, typical as well of her appreciation of a mutuality that could enable a more congenial relationship, and of her instinct to ignore the past that Pip and Miss Havisham remain enmeshed in. (222)

Estella uses the themes of romance to play-act as lovers. She will not make him cry, and he can be her servant.

Pip refuses to understand that Estella's inherited lovesickness leaves her incapable of participating in a conventional love story. Since he defines her in relation to a love story, the only question he has about her is whether or not he will be in her love story as well. Pip discounts Estella's assertions that she cannot love, assuming that the only barrier to her falling in love with him is a class barrier. He reads her beauty in the signs of her class – a class that he is appropriating as quickly as possible with his education, clothes, and gentleman's pursuits in London. He hopes upon meeting her at Satis House for the first time as an adult that he will have bridged the class barrier, but her increased beauty and continental manner make clear that she is still unmistakably above him; "the air of inaccessibility which her beauty and her manner gave her, tormented me in midst of my delight, and at the height of the assurance I felt that our patroness had chosen us for one another" (239). He feels that Miss Havisham has authored his and Estella's love story just as he wishes it to be, but that he is behind in his preparation for the hero role. At dinner that same evening, Mr. Jaggers has joined them, and Pip reads Jaggers as giving Estella an admiring look, even though the text does not express what Jaggers's real thoughts are; "Miss Havisham, in a fantastic way, had put some of the most beautiful jewels from her dressing-table into Estella's hair, and about her bosom and arms; and I saw even my guardian look at her from under his thick eyebrows, and raise them a little, when her loveliness was before him, with those rich flushes of glitter and colour in it" (243). Estella may be a beautiful woman, but Pip discusses her "loveliness" as having "rich flushes of glitter and colour in it" – terms that also describe the fantastic jewels that she wears. Pip is writing his own impressions of

Estella on Jaggers's face, and he assumes that other men conflate her beauty and her class as well. Later, when Pip escorts Estella to her London home from her coach, he still associates her rich clothing with her beauty, but he sees a change in her manner towards him. Estella is in "her furred traveling-dress, [and] seemed more delicately beautiful than she had ever seemed yet, even in my eyes. Her manner was more winning than she had cared to let it be to me before, and I thought I saw Miss Havisham's influence in the change" (264). Estella may be more desirous of winning his affections, but Miss Havisham's influence cannot be a healthy one. Estella's winningness must be calculated, if it is more than she "cared" to show before and it is influenced by her adoptive mother.

As Estella and Pip discuss their London lives, Estella refers to the horror of growing up around Miss Havisham's relatives, who "sharpened" her wits "by their intriguing against [her], suppressed and defenceless, under the mask of sympathy and pity and what not that is soft and soothing" (267). Estella reveals that the spectator's response to the spectacle of what is pitiful, be it orphan or lovesick woman, may be just as staged as the presentation of hurt. Dickens shows that sympathy and lovesickness can both be the result of art and staging. Estella is an orphan, but she is denied pity or love because she is brought up in a house where her real suffering is nullified by the calculated suffering of Miss Havisham and the conniving pity of Miss Havisham's relatives. Estella continues to describe her childhood experiences with her mother by adoption, "You did not gradually open your round childish eyes wider and wider to the discovery of that imposter woman who calculates her stores of peace of mind for when

she wakes in the night. – I did” (267). Estella references Miss Havisham’s nightlife as the time when she really lives, but Estella claims that Miss Havisham has and makes use of “stores of peace of mind” that she maintains for when she is alone. Even Estella is not granted access to these moments of Miss Havisham’s peacefulness, and Estella is thereby denied a loving childhood. While Miss Havisham is often affectionate with Estella, her affection is merely entertainment: pleasure to see Estella’s beauty and pleasure at making Estella an object of class by pinning jewels to her hair and bosom.

Estella has enough distance from Satis House to be able to see that she was a singular creature, and that her own participation in lovesickness during her upbringing has warped her from understanding or desiring a family of her own. She speaks of this to Pip, allowing her anger to show through her mask of civility, because she recognizes in Pip another singular creature, warped by his sister and by Miss Havisham and her relatives, who even now plot against him. Pip, however, is not as advanced a reader as Estella and does not understand his life story as warped; he sees it as a comedy, a rags to riches tale, and he expects it to end with a marriage. When Estella gives Pip her hand after this exchange, Pip holds it to his lips. Pip misses the point of Estella’s confessions. She does not desire saving, but companionship and understanding from the only other powerless child who experienced an unpleasant Satis House and could empathize with her. Pip’s reversion to a romantic gesture in what should be a moment of empathetic comradeship makes clear that Pip’s relationship with Estella is self-serving; he forces Estella to read every connection they have as a romantic one. As Darby asserts, Pip “has used Estella exactly as they both have been used, forced to embody their benefactors’

obsessions” (217). Awakened from her self-revelations by Pip’s romantic gesture, Estella responds to him with a frustrated teasing, “You ridiculous boy,” said Estella, “will you never take warning? Or do you kiss my hand in the spirit in which I once let you kiss my cheek?” (268). However, Pip does not kiss Estella’s hand in a “spirit of contempt for fawners and plotters” (268) as Estella desires because a spirit of contempt for plotters would have to turn Pip partially against his own actions and desires. As Darby notes, accepting Estella’s understanding of the manipulations of those around them “would be to come too close to the discomforts of his own relations with Miss Havisham” (223). Pip does not wish to disrespect Miss Havisham because he likes Miss Havisham’s concept of love as a means by which he will prove himself worthy of Estella and society. Petrarchan love creates identity in relation to an object of affection; Pip becomes a romantic stalker, one who bases his identity and social position on his object’s eventual return of his affections. The problem with believing that Estella will eventually submit to her adoptive mother, marry Pip, and then grow to love him is that the only sure reward of this belief is the beautiful delusion of relationship. Pip may enjoy his delusion now, but devotion to a lady does not necessarily win that lady, and when she is won by another man, the delusion cannot last.

Dickens establishes the power of the marriage plot and the social understanding that male desire necessitates female responsive love through his continual thwarting of the paradigm. Readers of a romantic text expect a twist or hardship to delay gratification, but Dickens presents constant verbal rejection of love from Estella, who is perceived as monstrous by the reader for her inability to see romantic love as salvific and desirable.

Darby writes, “In giving her the heroine’s place, Dickens emphasizes how uncomfortably she occupies it, even how emphatically she tries to reject it; she resists both Pip’s and Miss Havisham’s obsessive love” (217). Estella’s discomfort with reading romance into her life contrasts with Pip’s reading of her as at times wishing him to desire her: “It was impossible for me to avoid seeing that she cared to attract me; that she made herself winning; and would have won me even if the task had needed pains. . . . I should have felt that she held my heart in her hand because she willfully chose to do it, and not because it would have wrung any tenderness in her, to crush it and throw it away” (270). Of course, Pip has read Estella wrong in every “romantic” exchange with her that has proven to be one-sided. Frost claims that “Dickens has been adamant about the matter, persistently dissociating himself from Pip’s naïve belief that anyone as beautiful and enticing as Estella cannot be impervious to love” (13). The power of the conventional love story and the marriage plot that Dickens thwarts can be seen in the willingness of the reader to hope along with Pip again and again that next time will be different – that all Estella needs is time and independence to correct her upbringing and to allow her to stop seeing the story of love as manipulative. The very idea that it is Estella, and not Pip, who needs correction is strong at the same time that it is somewhat absurd in relation to the text itself.

Estella is not only written into a romantic story by every male who meets her, but she is written into a story of filial love as well. While Miss Havisham may have figured out the traditions of romantic love enough to pervert them by enacting them quite literally, she proves that her participation in literary lovesickness is not fully satisfying in

and of itself. Miss Havisham has combined her love of Estella with her hatred of the love story and her desire for revenge on men. Even though she has denied Estella the love that might arise from her moments of peace of mind, Miss Havisham has not been able to freeze her emotions over the years, and she finds that her life is unfulfilled without the notice and regard of her adopted daughter. One night, Estella pulls away from Miss Havisham's clutching of her hand and wakes Miss Havisham from her fairy tale of maternal devotion and social revenge. Miss Havisham considers it traitorous to pull away from her to the hearth, "Where I took her into this wretched breast when it was first bleeding from its stabs" (304). Frost states, "With self-engrossed hysteria Miss Havisham demands a response appropriate to her own 'burning love'" (14). A frigid Estella asserts the impossibility of loving her step-mother, even asserting the truth of their relationship without any softening of emotion, "Mother by adoption, I have said that I owe everything to you. . . . And if you ask me to give you what you never gave me, my gratitude and duty cannot do impossibilities" (304-5). Miss Havisham cries, "Did I never give her a burning love . . . let her call me mad!" (305). She pushes Estella to name her the thing that she has not been thus far in the novel, daring Estella to diagnose lovesickness as madness, but Estella supports Miss Havisham's reading of herself as not mad. Tambling paraphrases Estella as saying, "Miss Havisham's behaviour was not mad, but motivated" (73). However, Tambling reads both Miss Havisham and Estella as mad, reading Estella's answer with an emphasis on the "I." Thus, "Why should I call you mad" as a response suggests that Estella accepts she is the same type as Miss Havisham, part of what Miss Havisham is. Tambling assumes that the

mad would not call each other mad.⁵⁷ However, Tambling overlooks Estella's calm rationality. Estella's response, "Why should I call you mad . . . I, of all people? Does anyone live, who knows what set purposes you have . . . what a steady memory you have" (305), disproves Miss Havisham's madness by asserting Miss Havisham's rationality and unfailing control of herself and her performances of lovesickness. Indeed, Estella is like Miss Havisham not because they are both lovesick or both mad, but because both follow set courses of action and both live in aberrant relation to the story of love. Estella reveals what Pip sensed at the moment Estella claims to have no heart – that Estella and Miss Havisham are both entirely aware of the identities they are enacting and they are both in complete control. Both Estella's immunity to lovesickness and Miss Havisham's staged lovesickness are technologies of their selves.

Estella explains how her exposure to lovesickness caused her to understand love as disease. She presents her understanding of love through the metaphor of sunshine; "there was such a thing as daylight, but that it was made to be her enemy and destroyer, and she must always turn against it, for it had blighted you and would else blight her" (306). Estella has to explain to Miss Havisham why she cannot give her filial love. Miss Havisham's life has been blighted by her participation in a lovesickness tradition that insists upon her faithful remembrance of the man she loved, even though that remembrance ever increases her hate, distrust, and betrayal and even though that remembrance causes her to shut out her adopted daughter from her few peaceful moments. Estella's life has been blighted by her inability to participate in a conventional love story and her inability to accept that the love of those around her is anything but

destructive. Estella's relationship to lovesickness has left her incapable of performing a love that is not blighting and destructive as well. Estella treats Pip differently from others, which distresses Pip as he sees Bentley Drummle receiving preferential treatment. He rebukes Estella for "looks and smiles this very night, such as you never give to – me" (311), comparing Drummle to a moth around a flame. Estella explains herself to Pip:

"Do you want me then," said Estella, turning suddenly with a fixed and serious, if not angry, look, "to deceive and entrap you?"

"Do you deceive and entrap him, Estella?"

"Yes, and many others – all of them but you." (311-12)

Estella offers Pip more friendship than she offers to any other character in the novel, denying that she ever tries to entrap him and answering his questions honestly. Darby writes, "Her words are never indifferent; what Pip finds heartless is her insistence on her own point of view, a perspective that is chilled, sardonic, unable to love, but ready to be friends. She offers Pip a clear alternative to his self-casting as hero of romantic chivalry, a position that would be, if he would accept it, quite different from that of her other admirers" (221). Pip is not pleased with his position as friend as opposed to other men's positions as admirers.

Pip is not able to divorce himself from a desire to play the lover to Estella, even though she admits that she sees love as an enemy and thus seeks to deceive men. When Pip learns that Magwitch is his benefactor and his dreams of Miss Havisham plotting a

love story for him are ruined, Pip travels to Satis House to see Estella and admit his love for her. Estella's response to his loving is entirely unemotional:

“It seems,” said Estella, very calmly, “that there are sentiments, fancies – I don’t know how to call them – which I am not able to comprehend. When you say you love me, I know what you mean, as a form of words; but nothing more. You address nothing in my breast, you touch nothing there. I don’t care for what you say at all. I have tried to warn you of this; now, have I not?” (362)

Dickens achieves much in this passage. He has Estella explain love as she understands it, as a convention, not a feeling. She is so very analytical that she understands love as a “form of words,” and she even recognizes the grammar of love that Pip follows, waiting to announce his love in the most romantic way possible when all hope of marrying Estella is lost. She understands that the linguistic power of love affects people, for she has used words to deceive and entrap men in London; however, Estella is so analytical and so little emotional that she cannot understand how the linguistics of love affect feelings. Pip is attracted to Miss Havisham's romantic language and has accepted the relationship with Estella that Miss Havisham has led him to believe will happen at the same time that he rejects the actual friendship that Estella offers. All Estella can do with Pip in this moment, as a stern schoolmistress to a boy who will not learn his lessons, is to repeat again that she does not have a heart and force him to repeat back his admission that she has been honest with him about her inability to love or be moved by loving, and Pip agrees “in a miserable manner, ‘Yes’” (363), that she has warned him.

Estella shows that she is better at reading Pip than Pip is at reading her. She has known that he was not listening to her, even though she continually repeats her message in the text. She forces Pip to confess that he heard her and refused to believe her, and Pip turns to a social understanding of what makes a woman (and a beautiful one at that) participate in a romantic text.

“Yes. But you would not be warned, for you thought I did not mean it. Now, did you not think so?”

“I thought and hoped you could not mean it. You, so young, untried, and beautiful, Estella! Surely it is not in Nature.”

“It is in *my* nature,” she returned. And then she added, with a stress upon the words, “It is in the nature formed within me. I make a great difference between you and all other people when I say so much. I can do no more.” (363)

Pip cites Nature as the thing that gave him hope. His dream of Estella returning his love is based upon his understanding of how Nature created woman to respond to a love story. Estella cunningly replaces the predominance of Nature with the effects of nurture on her life, but in so doing, she is not entering a Darwinian debate so much as redefining the natural. Not only does Estella claim to be natural instead of monstrous, but by so doing, she posits that there is no nature that everyone conforms to but that nature is a social construct, just as love is a linguistic form and lovesickness a production.

Estella’s subsequent marriage to Bentley Drummle is her way of participating in the story that people insist upon writing her into, while letting herself out of that tale at

the same time as marriage ultimately ends the marriage plot. Estella can fulfill Miss Havisham's fantasy of revenge by, as Pip says, "the greatest slight and injury that could be done to the many far better men who admire you, and to the few who truly love you" (363). Her choice of one man over the others ends her charade as a beautiful damsel needing rescue or a beautiful maiden waiting to be won; as a wife she will be somewhat protected from every man she encounters feeling a need to write her into his own story of love, using her beauty to increase his status. But, finally, Gribble asserts, Estella "gives herself to Bentley Drummle out of a strange kind of integrity" (138). When Pip questions her choice of Drummle, Estella replies

"On whom should I fling myself away?" she retorted, with a smile.

"Should I fling myself away upon the man who would the soonest feel (if people do feel such things) that I took nothing to him? There! It is done. I shall do well enough, and so will my husband. As to leading me into what you call this fatal step, Miss Havisham would have had me wait, and not marry yet; but I am tired of the life I have led, which has very few charms for me, and I am willing enough to change it. Say no more. We shall never understand each other." (364)

Estella replies to Pip's fears for her with a "mean" and "stupid brute" (364), "Don't be afraid of my being a blessing to him . . . I shall not be that" (364). Estella is unable to feel love as she assumes she must according to a physiology that associates love with the heart. Raised by a lovesick woman and taught to be afraid of love's blighting power, Estella refuses to accept the power of the words of love – that Pip's verbalization of his

love of her could awaken a passionate, responsive love in her as Compeyson's beautiful lies awoke in Miss Havisham. Just as Miss Havisham's participation in the lovesickness tradition cures her of feeling any love for Compeyson, so does Estella's participation in the lovesickness tradition inoculate her from the disease of love. Thus, Estella chooses to marry a man who is too insensitive to feel love for her or to feel her lack of love for him in a powerful decision that frees her from Miss Havisham's fantasy of revenge on men and from Pip's insistent writing of her into his love story.

The Conventional Notion of a Lover

Miss Havisham refuses to turn to a new male lover or to pine away in continuation of her thwarted love, instead seeking revenge and warping conventional lovesickness in a showy adaptation of thwarted love as a weapon. Having been raised by a woman in an aberrant relation to traditional love, Estella grows into such an adept critic of love and lovesickness that she is unable to understand her own emotions outside of a social framework that denies that feelings originate from individuals instead of from a social lie. The effect that the woman participating in grotesque relation to lovesickness and the woman outside of the discourses of love have on a young man's understanding of love and his masculinity is profound. Pip grows to understand himself as lovesick by Miss Havisham's desire to incorporate him into a particular discourse of love and Estella's desire to divorce him from all discourses of love.

Like Gaskell's Ruth, Pip has an innate sense of right and wrong, which establishes him as something different and nobler than his sister's blood and upbringing warrant.

My sister's bringing up had made me sensitive. . . . Within myself, I had sustained, from my babyhood, a perpetual conflict with injustice. I had known, from the time when I could speak, that my sister, in her capricious and violent coercion, was unjust to me. I had cherished a profound conviction that her bringing me up by hand, gave her no right to bring me up by jerks. Through all my punishments, disgraces, fasts and vigils, and other penitential performances, I had nursed this assurance; and to my communing so much with it, in a solitary and unprotected way, I in great part refer the fact that I was morally timid and very sensitive.

(63)

Pip asserts his innate sense of right and wrong to explain his understanding of the injustice that his sister makes him feel. He likens the discipline he receives from his sister to religious observance, calling it "punishments, disgraces, fasts and vigils, and other penitential performances." Of course, just as with lovesickness, performance of a religious act does not require that the worshipper feel what his posture suggests. Even though the structured postures of religion show and embody penitence, they do not always reveal a submissive heart. Through this understanding of the value of the postures of an emotion, Pip reveals an early camaraderie with Miss Havisham's showy participations in lovesickness.

In fact, his sister's power over him is what teaches him injustice and, by default, a sense of his own value. He reveals that in "all" his "performances" of sorrowful and submissive brother/child to her "violent" and "capricious" sister/mother, he has "nursed" the assurance that Mrs. Joe is wrong.⁵⁸ The adult narrator Pip asserts that injustice is the easiest of moral wrongs to understand. Yet, even with an innate understanding of injustice to bolster his sense of his own value, Pip desires the acceptance of Estella, whom he recognizes to be a girl who, like his sister, assigns unjust value to people. He leaves his first visit at Satis House believing, "I was a common labouring-boy; that my hands were coarse, that my boots were thick; that I had fallen into a despicable habit of calling knaves Jacks; that I was much more ignorant than I had considered myself last night, and generally that I was in a low-lived bad way" (65). Pip cannot properly value his identity in the presence of a self-assured young lady who scorns him. Pip does not see value in his sister's hardness and anger, but Pip sees Estella's value in her beauty and in her greater knowledge of social class. Estella's disdain of the "common" and Miss Havisham's showy and symbolic placement of jewels in Estella's hair counters Pip's sense of innate worth.

While Miss Havisham holds great influence over Pip's imagination and over the way he sees the world, it is not until we read Pip's lies about her to Mrs. Joe and Uncle Pumblechook that we see how odd Pip really understands Miss Havisham to be. The power and force of her story and of the lovesickness myth is great. Pip feels "convinced that if I described Miss Havisham's as my eyes had seen it, I should not be understood" (66), which leads to his telling preposterous lies as more believable than the truth. Two

things seem important about this. The first is that normal, run-of-the-mill people seem quite willing to believe anything about her.⁵⁹ Miss Havisham's seclusion has made her so remote from others that her neighbors look upon her as a foreign thing (65-66). The other is that Pip is led to protect Miss Havisham's obvious eccentricity from the prying eyes of the curious and believing community. The lovesick woman has a sacred status, and while she is often a spectacle in literature – her pain speaking through a specific set of literary symbols and symptoms – the jilted lady is someone Pip feels should be hidden. The single male is in a protective relation with the lovesick woman – perhaps because she has no other protector. Pip acknowledges that “although she was perfectly incomprehensible to me, I entertained an impression that there would be something coarse and treacherous in my dragging her as she really was (to say nothing of Miss Estella) before the contemplation of Mrs. Joe” (66). The reclusivity of the lovesick, odd woman is threatened here, and Pip is uncomfortable reversing Miss Havisham's seclusion before people who wish to hear about a spectacle.

By emphasizing her eccentric wealthiness, Pip protects her from others' knowledge of her participation in the lovesickness tradition and her aberrant performance of gender and sexuality. Pip uses Miss Havisham's class to conceal her gender, focusing his lies upon images of eccentric wealth rather than on a staging of a broken heart. Later, Uncle Pumblechook arrives, “preyed upon by a devouring curiosity to be informed of all I had seen and heard” (66), and his arrival makes Pip “vicious in [his] reticence” (66). Gribble reads Mrs. Joe and Uncle Pumblechook as pleased that Pip is to play at Miss Havisham's because it is “thought to promise the unveiling of hidden

mysteries, for Miss Havisham's eccentricity and seclusion are legendary" (127). Once Pip declares Miss Havisham to be "Very tall and dark" (67) and gains Mr. Pumblechook's approval, he knows that he can lie about everything.

Pip's lies become increasingly outrageous. First he declares Miss Havisham to have been sitting indoors "in a black velvet coach" (67), then Pip recounts that Miss Havisham, Estella, and he "all had cake and wine on gold plates" (67) and that four dogs "fought for veal cutlets out of a silver basket" (68). He presents Miss Havisham with a healthy appetite, not as pining and wasting away. To this, "Mr. Pumblechook and Mrs. Joe stared at one another again, in utter amazement" (68). Their amazement is not disbelief, and to their questions, Pip is "frantic – a reckless witness under the torture – and would have told them anything" (68) – anything except the truth, of course. Mrs. Joe and Uncle Pumblechook break in to Pip's story to discuss its plausibility:

"Can this be possible, uncle?" asked Mrs. Joe. "What can the boy mean?"

"I'll tell you, Mum," said Mr. Pumblechook. "My opinion is, it's a sedan-chair. She's flighty, you know – very flighty – quite flighty enough to pass her days in a sedan-chair."

"Did you ever see her in it, uncle?" asked Mrs. Joe.

"How could I?" he returned, forced to the admission, "when I never see her in my life? Never clapped eyes upon her!"

"Goodness, uncle! And yet you have spoken to her!"

“Why, don’t you know,” said Mr. Pumblechook, testily, “that when I have been there, I have been took up to the outside of her door, and the door has stood ajar, and she has spoke to me that way. Don’t say you don’t know *that*, Mum.” (68)

The willingness to believe the most absurd tale about the rich, reclusive woman is stretched to its limit in this scene, but instead of the adults questioning the child’s veracity, Mr. Pumblechook labels her “flighty” to remove the necessity of explaining the inexplicable to Mrs. Joe.

Pip continues his lie to say they played with flags, and the grown-up Pip interjects in the text, to make sure the reader understands how very far-fetched these lies are, “I beg to observe that I think of myself with amazement, when I recall the lies I told on this occasion” (68). Young Pip, however, describes the imaginary flags:

“Estella waved a blue flag, and I waved a red one, and Miss Havisham waved one sprinkled all over with little gold stars, out at the coach-window. And then we all waved our swords and hurrahed.”

“Swords!” repeated my sister. “Where did you get swords from?”

“Out of a cupboard,” said I. “And I saw pistols in it – and jam – and pills. And there was no daylight in the room, but it was lighted up with candles.”

“That’s true, Mum,” said Mr. Pumblechook, with a grave nod.

“That’s the state of the case, for that much I’ve seen myself.” (68-9)

Pip tells just enough truth to gain verification from Mr. Pumblechook that Miss Havisham's room is dark and candle-lit. This verification seems to substantiate the rest of Pip's story. The gullibility of outsiders, seeking to peep at the life of the rich, reclusive woman, is complete. Mr. Pumblechook and Mrs. Joe show no end to their fascination at details about the rich, female hermit and show no end of belief in her exoticism. The more outlandish Pip's tale, the more they are willing to believe it. Just as Pip earlier performs penitence for his sister's benefit, he uses his body language to play to a crowd; "I with an obtrusive show of artlessness on my countenance, stared at them, and plaited the right leg of my trousers with my right hand" (69). The older, narrator Pip is convinced that he would have been caught in his lie had he continued because he is about to fabricate "a balloon in the yard, and should have hazarded the statement but for my invention being divided between that phenomenon and a bear in the brewery" (69). The adult narrator is being kind here. Given what Mr. Pumblechook and Mrs. Joe have already believed, the only reason Pip could be caught in a lie is that Mr. Pumblechook has seen part of the yard. Without direct proof to refute Pip's statements, however, the adults are willing to believe everything Pip says.

This passage is the work of a child's fantasy, and just as fantasy literatures only work when the reader suspends disbelief, so do Mrs. Joe and Mr. Pumblechook suspend all rational qualities of discernment between truth and fiction. They want to believe that riches and solitude have rendered Miss Havisham the strangest, craziest person in the world. Tambling writes, "Miss Havisham's madness, despite her body's incarceration, affects everybody with the need to make reparation for her abandonment at twenty to

nine on her wedding day. The power of the woman's mad reading of her situation is at the heart of a contaminating hysteria in the text, which the autobiographical writing of the text notices, if it has not constructed it" (76). Miss Havisham may not have been driven mad by lovesickness, but Pip's fantastical lies prove how willing others are to read her as crazy. Pip's fear that Miss Havisham will not be understood proves both that he desires to protect her from the gaze of the vulgar crowd and that he reads her as rationally conveying a message through her performance of lovesickness. He discovers what Miss Havisham has already learned, that others will believe anything about a person who hides from them because they must. The lovesick woman is entirely othered in this novel by her own choice to live as a hermit and Pip's desire to keep her performances of lovesickness hidden from others. Miss Havisham is safe to act however she wishes and will not suffer social censure. The attractiveness of lovesickness is the ability to write one's own story with impunity.

The adults are so obsessed with Miss Havisham's oddity that they wish to share this bizarre narrative with Joe, whose subsequent belief in the tall tale draws out Pip's remorse; "Now, when I saw Joe open his blue eyes and roll them all round the kitchen in helpless amazement, I was overtaken by penitence; but only as regarded him – not in the least as regarded the other two. Towards Joe, and Joe only, I considered myself a young monster" (69). Miss Havisham's effect on Pip is not only to draw out his loyalty and a desire to protect her, but in the commission of the lies that shield her from his family, Pip becomes monstrous to himself. He feels an obligation to Miss Havisham; the desire to protect the lovesick woman causes Pip to become courtly and gallant in relation to her

and be a better suitor than the man who jilted her. Pip's lies for Miss Havisham cause him to feel out of control of himself. This draws a need to confess the truth to Joe, and therefore Pip admits, "'I don't know what possessed me, Joe,' . . . sitting down in the ashes at his feet, hanging my head" (70). Pip's desire to hide the truth is related to his desire to protect Miss Havisham and his desire to protect himself. Pip tells Joe, "I felt very miserable, and that I hadn't been able to explain myself to Mrs. Joe and Pumblechook who were so rude to me, and that there had been a beautiful young lady at Miss Havisham's who was dreadfully proud, and that I wished I was not common, and that the lies had come of it somehow, though I didn't know how" (70). Pip explains that his lies spring out of a misery he doesn't understand. Pip chooses to tell lies related to Miss Havisham's wealth and class to cover her aberrant performance of her gender, but he is also covering the misery associated with his class and Estella's performance of gender. Pip may have an innate understanding of injustice, but it partially fails him in his interactions with Estella. Estella's spurning advances that he doesn't even make is both confusing and irritating to him. He knows that she is unfair, but he is unable to keep from admiring her, and thus, feeling that he is common. He cannot explain his inferiority to Mrs. Joe and Uncle Pumblechook, who are also inferior, without insulting them.

As Pip's visits continue and he sees the room with her bride-cake and hears of Miss Havisham's desire to die in fulfillment of a curse on Compeyson's head, Pip is also of increasing interest to Miss Havisham. Her life never changes beyond a tale of humiliating loss and slow waiting for death, but her need for distraction leads her to build stories around Estella, and she becomes obsessed with the visions she can already

see of Estella participating in a love story—the story of the nineteenth-century woman. Constantly performing her story of lost love, Miss Havisham looks upon Pip as a “distraction,” a character in the only new story that she can tell. While Estella is young, Miss Havisham is not interested in hearing Estella’s side of her relationship with Pip,⁶⁰ but she seeks out information from Pip to support the tale she wishes to see play out before her:

Miss Havisham would often ask me in a whisper, or when were alone, “Does she grow prettier and prettier, Pip?” And when I said yes (for indeed she did), would seem to enjoy it greedily. Also, when we played at cards Miss Havisham would look on, with a miserly relish of Estella’s moods, whatever they were. And sometimes, when her moods were so many and so contradictory of one another that I was puzzled what to say or do, Miss Havisham would embrace her with lavish fondness, murmuring something in her ear that sounded like “Break their hearts my pride and hope, break their hearts and have no mercy!” (95)

Miss Havisham feels pride in Estella’s beauty and snobbery, setting excessive value on Estella’s social presentation of class and femininity. Miss Havisham instructs Estella to have no mercy on others, especially men, and in so doing elevates Estella into the position of the Petrarchan beloved – a position of power. Mercy is shown by the strong to the weak. In the chivalrous, Petrarchan model of true love, women show mercy and pity to men. Miss Havisham teaches Estella not to weaken herself by submitting to the Petrarchan love story, but actively to thwart it. Pip is encouraged to admire Estella

through Miss Havisham's enjoyment of his admissions that Estella is pretty. As Pip sees Estella's varying moods rewarded, he learns to respect her social power.

After Pip's visits have stopped and he is indentured to Joe, Pip returns to Satis House in the hopes of seeing Estella and does not receive a warm reception. The ever-distrustful Miss Havisham does not believe that someone would visit her out of friendship or to report on his progress as a blacksmith, as Pip claims that he does; "Well?" said she, fixing her eyes upon me. "I hope you want nothing? You'll get nothing" (116). Miss Havisham uses direct eye contact as a sign of hostility and also to verify that Pip wishes to see Estella. She glories in the announcement that Estella is gone; "'Abroad,' said Miss Havisham; 'educating for a lady; far out of reach; prettier than ever; admired by all who see her. Do you feel that you have lost her?'" (116). As when he was a child, Miss Havisham focuses on Pip's emotions, teaching him to think of Estella as she relates to his feelings. The question is an odd one. Pip has never been accepted as a suitor by Estella and he has never been her fiancé, so he cannot have lost her in the same way that Miss Havisham lost her lover. Miss Havisham rewrites a story of heartbreak but gives the advantage to Estella. She recreates the Petrarchan paradigm in which male obsession is created at the sight of the beautiful beloved, while the lady is cold and impervious. Miss Havisham enjoys her mistreatment of Pip in this scene; "There was such a malignant enjoyment in her utterance of the last words, and she broke in to such a disagreeable laugh, that I was at a loss what to say" (116). Pip is rendered ridiculous for admiring what is not even present at the same time that he is rendered impotent by Miss Havisham's consequent dismissal of him before he can answer her

question. Trying to turn the tables in love, Miss Havisham does not feminize Pip by rendering him inactive and making him wait to receive Estella's advances. Rather, Miss Havisham coaches Pip into assuming the posture of the old, literary chivalrous suitor, who seeks while he is actively rejected. Thus, she is not forcing him into a feminine role, but into an outdated, poetic, masculine one.⁶¹

What is unique about this repositioning of the genders in the power structures of love is that the woman who best understands the nature of these social codes of lovesickness is the woman who is, in fact, not lovesick, yet who has devoted her life to a hermetic participation in the tradition of lovesickness.⁶² Miss Havisham's thoroughly manipulative lovesickness understands the power structures inherent in all the traditions of lovesickness. Instead of being a woman in power in the nineteenth century, an heiress whose will is paramount and who has to give up everything to prove her love to her poor suitor who has nothing to gamble on her in return, Miss Havisham desires to (re)create for Estella and Pip an older system, in which the woman's inherent worth and beauty put men in a position to prove themselves – a system that gives woman the power to reject. Miss Havisham is finally taking Matthew Pocket's advice that a woman should maintain control in a relationship until the wedding.

After Pip admits his desire to be a gentleman for Estella's sake to his fellow orphan and childhood friend Biddy, she questions whether or not his efforts will cause him to win Estella or even if Estella is worth winning. Pip admits that Estella is probably not worth the effort of changing to try to win her, and the adult Pip breaks into the text to posit, "But how could I, a poor dazed village lad, avoid that wonderful inconsistency

into which the best and wisest of men fall every day?" (129). Even the adult Pip who narrates this tale with more distance from it than the boy who lives it has trouble distancing himself from the powerful association of heroism with men who seek an impossible love. How can a "lad" act with more wisdom than "the best and wisest of men"? And if he cannot act differently than do the best and wisest of his sex, doesn't that place him in good company, anyway? The child Pip and the grown Pip both value themselves according to their participation in a convention that makes good men. The young Pip acknowledges to himself that there is something wrong with the way he thinks about love, but as he cannot figure out his error, his only recourse is to enact violence on himself.

I turned over on my face when I came to that, and got a good grasp on the hair on each side of my head, and wrenched it well. All the while knowing the madness of my heart to be so very mad and misplaced, that I was quite conscious it would have served my face right, if I had lifted it up by my hair, and knocked it against the pebbles as a punishment for belonging to such an idiot. (129)

The feeling of possession that compelled Pip to lie about Miss Havisham's looks and manner has now shifted to madness. He is not delirious, for he understands rationally that his heart's desire is mad. He takes out his anger at himself, masochistically pulling his own hair. Pip asks himself, "whether I did not surely know that if Estella were beside me at that moment instead of Biddy, she would make me miserable? I was obliged to admit that I did know for a certainty, and I said to myself, 'Pip, what a fool you are!'"

(130). Pip's madness is trading the real for the imaginary. Thornton describes Miss Havisham as "a castrating woman" and "a frightful medusa" because she "paralyzes Pip by making him love Estella" (106). Pip is beside Biddy and yet is impotent to have a relationship with her because he has bought into Miss Havisham's valuation of Estella. He is proud that he recognizes Estella's value and believes it to be more noble to make himself worthy of her than to accept himself as he is. Miss Havisham's teachings have created in Estella a callous young lady and in Pip an old-fashioned lover.⁶³ Her grotesque participation in female lovesickness has created in Pip a version of the chivalrous man who loves, serves, worships, and sometimes sickens from afar and completely without hope of requital. In a way, Miss Havisham has castrated the Victorian man, who is commonly pictured as confident and self-made, and in binding herself to a paradigm that insists that women sicken and do not recover from being jilted, she actually teaches Pip, the Victorian male, how to form one's identity around a lost love and how to sicken in response to unresponsive desire or to unattainable love.

U. C. Knoepfelmacher posits that Miss Havisham and Mrs. Joe are two "masculine women who so selfishly deform their nurslings in this novel," and claims that "the man-hating Miss Havisham ... deforms Estella and Pip" (83). While Miss Havisham and Mrs. Joe are both powerful women, they themselves are barricaded by the trappings of their femininity: Mrs. Joe by her apron and Miss Havisham by her wedding dress, bridal feast, and ultimately by her lethargy. Not only is Miss Havisham feminine, but she bolsters Pip's masculinity through her display of femininity and her fixation on a

love story as the story of one's life. Pip sees her control over her environment and assigns her an authoring power:

She had adopted Estella, she had as good as adopted me, and it could not fail to be her intention to bring us together. She reserved it for me to restore the desolate house, admit the sunshine into the dark rooms, set the clocks a going and the cold hearths a blazing, tear down the cobwebs, destroy the vermin – in short, do all the shining deeds of the young Knight of romance, and marry the Princess. (231)

Here Pip feels the attraction of hopeless love, and it is the love of the romantic. He desires to be the chivalrous hero as much as he desires Estella to see him that way. Anny Sadrin is right to posit that the difference between this scene and Pip's youthful encounter with Satis House is that "Even when the narrative agencies place him in the fairy-tale world of Satis House, he is impressed and fascinated, but he is not self-deceived . . . Both wear the 'trappings of romance', Miss Havisham in particular, but Pip's very similes show that he is not deluded; and he knows very well, besides, that he is no better than 'a common labouring boy'" (84). Pip changes from a young boy who sees through artifice into a young man who desires it. Here we see the literary influences on Pip in his seeing himself as the "young knight" of romance coming into Estella's life.⁶⁴ He chooses to acknowledge a tradition of love literature that allows an unknown and most likely uncouth suitor to prove himself to an established lady. He also chooses to write his experience in a literary tradition in which the lady is often skeptical of the abilities of the knight chosen for her, and in which the lady may even openly abuse and

humiliate the unproven knight. Like the knight of the courtly romance, who owes his eventual love to the benefactor who has the faith to send him on a quest, Pip attributes the cause and success of his love to Miss Havisham, not to Estella. His reading of their story is not only absurd because the reader sees nothing heroic about the morally and physically weak Pip, but also because Pip assumes that since Miss Havisham's jilting, her whole life and world have been scripted for his own prosperous love – to enable Pip to “restore the desolate house.” Pip forgets that Miss Havisham, as the author of her life's story, is crafting a tragedy that ends in a curse.

Pip shifts the genre of his story from a courtly romance to a mystery. Satis House imposes itself in his sight; the large brick building connotes his future wealth and stability, while the blocked windows and over-growth of ivy connote hidden treasures and secrets; “I had stopped to look at the house as I passed; and its seared red brick walls, blocked windows, and strong green ivy clasping even the stacks of chimneys with its twigs and tendons, as if with sinewy old arms, had made up a rich attractive mystery, of which I was the hero” (231-2). Once again, Pip figures himself as the hero – the man with the key to the house and its secrets. Gribble writes, “Satis House stands in more sharply ironic juxtaposition to Pip's romanticism precisely because, seeing it as it is, and always has been, he now sees it as something against which his gentle, old-fashioned dreams can exert a decisive power” (131-2). Pip does not heed the warning inherent in Satis House's stasis.

Along with picturing himself in Satis House, Pip fixates on his feelings for Estella, just as Miss Havisham has encouraged him to do. He claims that his dream of

house and heroism is inspired; he never thinks of himself as having power to craft his love story.

Estella was the inspiration of it, and the heart of it, of course. But, though she had taken such strong possession of me, though my fancy and my hope were so set upon her, though her influence on my boyish life and character had been all-powerful, I did not, even that romantic morning, invest her with any attributes save those she possessed. I mention this in this place, of a fixed purpose, because it is the clue by which I am to be followed into my poor labyrinth. According to my experience, the conventional notion of a lover cannot be always true. The unqualified truth is, that when I loved Estella with the love of a man, I loved her simply because I found her irresistible. Once for all; I knew to my sorrow, often and often, if not always, that I loved her against reason, against promise, against peace, against hope, against happiness, against all discouragement that could be. Once for all; I loved her none the less because I knew it, and it had no more influence in restraining me, than if I had devoutly believed her to be human perfection. (232)

Pip defines his own love as unconventional. By loving her, even on a romantic morning, only for the qualities that she possesses, he defines conventional love as the love that is blind. The lover loves precisely because he does not know his lady's bad qualities. Pip's love is different, however. He loves Estella because he does know her bad qualities. He loves her regardless of her feelings for him because "[he] knew it." Gribble notes, "For

all its air of candid, unillusioned maturity, Pip's confession merely substitutes one romantic stereotype for another. The passage makes us aware of that irony; and yet, not all of the parallels in the history of courtly love can belie the genuineness of this sharp pain" (133). Pip's love is an acknowledged love for love's sake. He loves to be a good lover, not to receive or because he receives love in return. He has been schooled by the incredibly feminine Miss Havisham into the very epitome of the masculine Petrarchan lover, who loves because he must love with hopeless abandon the beautiful object that is above him and seek not for requital but merely not to be rejected. Margaret Flanders Darby asserts that the conversations between Pip and Estella and Miss Havisham "give Dickens his chance: to identify with, yet undermine his protagonist, and to sympathize with, yet question the integrity of unrequited love" (215). Dickens also makes conventional love and longing appealing to the reader through Pip's descriptive passages of the morning and the house that contains his lady love only to undermine the reader's expectations of a successful suit.

Pip's desire to approach the house as he always has is the reader's only clue that Pip will fare no better on this day than on any other visit to Satis House. He plans to "arrive at the gate at my old time" (232). Again, the reader sees Pip rejecting agency and following his role as he understands Miss Havisham to have written it. He acts just as he believes Miss Havisham expects him to. Pip also reveals symptoms of mild illness and focuses on experiencing them fully; "When I had rung at the bell with an unsteady hand, I turned my back upon the gate, while I tried to get my breath and keep the beating of my heart moderately quiet. I heard the side door open, and steps come across the court-

yard; but I pretended not to hear, even when the gate swung on its rusty hinges” (231-2).

Pip is reveling in his weakness. The “unsteady hand,” breathlessness, and quickened pulse are dwelt upon for the reader, even as he uses his posture to conceal his emotion from those around him. He is eager to enter the house, yet he does not watch for the gatekeeper; instead, he uses his body language to suggest that he is unconcerned or bored with his present errand as he earlier uses his body language to suggest penitence to the sister he resents. Pip is a good pupil of Miss Havisham’s. He has listened to her lessons extolling the virtues and status of Estella until he longs to be near her, and he has treated Miss Havisham’s presentation of symptoms of ill health to explain her relationship to the story of love as modeling for his own benefit. He now understands his body as an instrument to prove his love. In this passage, however, he hides his symptoms from others, making much of his somatic responses to his anticipation of seeing Estella to prove to himself that he loves her.

Miss Havisham’s schooling of Pip into the proper posturing can be seen in Pip’s first meeting with Estella after her return to England from abroad. It is at this time that Estella tells him that she has no heart, and she vaguely and inexplicably reminds him of Miss Havisham. Pip rejects her openness to him, refusing to accept as accurate her self-analysis that the “singular little creature” grew into an unfeeling woman. He prefers instead to understand her as resistant to but already written into his love story. When Estella leaves to dress for dinner, Pip reveals his complicity with Miss Havisham; “As Estella looked back over her shoulder before going out at the door, Miss Havisham kissed that hand to her, with a ravenous intensity that was of its kind quite dreadful”

(239). Frost asserts, “Dickens imagines [Miss Havisham] as a particularly horrible cannibal who devours the people she loves as well as those for whom she cares nothing” (17). Pip witnesses Miss Havisham’s passion for Estella, defines it as “ravenous” and “dreadful,” and yet he does not recognize that the unhealthily intense love of the woman grotesquely performing lovesickness for the woman performing desirability is akin to his own oppressive desire for Estella. Pip would not call his own affection for Estella “dreadful,” even though he is just as forceful in making Estella play the siren by his persistent lovemaking to her as the attractive lady who does not wish to be wooed. Miss Havisham turns to Pip and directs his affection as if it were a catechism that must be learnt by heart:

“Is she beautiful, graceful, well-grown? Do you admire her?”

“Everybody must who sees her, Miss Havisham.”

She drew an arm around my neck, and drew my head close down to hers as she sat in the chair. “Love her, love her, love her! How does she use you?”

Before I could answer (if I could have answered so difficult a question at all), she repeated, “Love her, love her, love her! If she favours you, love her. If she wounds you, love her. If she tears your heart to pieces – and as it gets older and stronger, it will tear deeper – love her, love her, love her!” (239-40)

Miss Havisham forces Pip’s confession of Estella’s beauty, which he is eager to give. But then she repeats the same message over and over – that Pip is to love Estella. While

Miss Havisham asks Pip how responsive Estella is to his loving, she does not wait for his answer because it is immaterial to her purpose. Pip must be taught to love at any cost and with no encouragement from the lady.

Miss Havisham does not acknowledge that Estella has any desires at all. Instead, she focuses Pip on her desire for Estella as if she is indeed the author of Estella's life:

“Hear me, Pip! I adopted her to be loved. I bred her and educated her, to be loved. I developed her into what she is, that she might be loved. Love her!”

She said the word often enough, and there could be no doubt that she meant to say it; but if the often repeated word had been hate instead of love – despair – revenge – dire death – it could not have sounded from her lips more like a curse. (240)

Pip does not notice that this determination of another's fate is dangerous. He does realize that Miss Havisham's affect is wrong for a conversation from a mother about her hopes that her daughter will be loved. He likens her repetition of “love her” to a curse, but Pip finds the discourse of love and lovesickness attractive enough that he is unconcerned whether Miss Havisham is crafting a tale that curses him, Estella, or both. He is so caught up in his performance of the hero of his romance that he blinds himself to the warning in Miss Havisham's appearance and tone, determined to prove himself the good suitor:

Far into the night, Miss Havisham's words, “Love her, love her, love her!” sounded in my ears. I adapted them for my own repetition, and said

to my pillow, "I love her, I love her, I love her!" hundreds of times. Then, a burst of gratitude came upon me, that she should be destined for me, once the blacksmith's boy. Then, I thought if she were, as I feared, by no means rapturously grateful for that destiny yet, when would she begin to be interested in me? When should I awaken the heart within her, that was mute and sleeping now? (244)

Miss Havisham has successfully schooled Pip into ideologies of Petrarchan love (that his lady is above him and that he is hopelessly unworthy of her), and Pip has married those qualities to the context of the courtly romance tradition (that someone with power assigns him a chance to save a distressed lady and that the lady is often antagonistic to his being her champion). He acknowledges that his love of Estella is an adaptation of Miss Havisham's command. As Darby writes, "if the hero has a partner, it is the fairy godmother, not the princess" (220). He even responds to his joyful love with gratitude towards Miss Havisham for creating this romantic destiny for him. When Pip in his rapture does finally think of Estella's actual feelings, he denies them entirely, choosing to believe that her heart is asleep instead of void of feeling for him. His good loving will "awaken" the heart of his sleeping beauty, and the lady who is "by no means rapturously grateful for" her destiny, will one day be interested in him.

Pip returns from Satis House to "London safe – but not sound, for my heart was gone" (246) and confesses his love of Estella to Herbert. Pip is confused at Herbert's lack of surprise, but Herbert maintains, "You brought your adoration and your portmanteau here, together. Told me! Why, you have always told me all day long. When

you told me your own story, you told me plainly that you began adoring her the first time you saw her” (247). Pip then proceeds to edit himself. “Very well, then,” said I, to whom this was a new and not unwelcome light, “I have never left off adoring her” (247-8). Herbert’s speaking adoration of Estella into Pip’s earliest stories about her is a welcome addition to Pip’s lover’s tale. The longer he has loved, the better his story is and the more merit he has as a lover. Pip’s willingness to rewrite his life’s story upon more romantic lines is just another sign of how committed he is to presenting himself as the quintessential suitor. In rewriting his difficult early relationship with Estella as a tale of love, he can explain away his feelings of coarseness and commonness under a convention that requires the suitor to be beneath his love; his acceptance of humiliation and his winning of her love contribute to bolster the good suitor’s self-esteem at the same time that his eventual marriage to her will afford him a new social position that will erase his unillustrious background.

Many critics have mentioned Pip’s passivity in the second book. Taylor asserts that Pip “has become a ghost—a literal representation of a being without heart and force—; he is disembodied, haunted, and passive. . . .without a heart of his own, he, like the heartless Estella who has filled his emptiness with her own, is a ‘puppet,’ made and unmade by others, drifting on credit in a financial bubble, waiting for what the winds will bring” (70). Taylor associates Pip’s heartlessness with his finances. “Credit” makes Pip unable to have a heart, to know his heart, or to be assertive. Having no career in London makes Pip a ghost. The attractiveness of discourses of all-consuming love that can end in a broken heart is that Pip can find his center; he can create a purpose out of

nothing, he can give that purpose life, breath, and a name, and he can make believe that his lack of identity is from having to wait upon the will of his beloved to make him complete instead of acknowledging an actual lack in himself when it comes to knowing how to be a man in Victorian London. Taylor is right that credit partially unmans Pip, but Dickens provides the reader with another character who is unsure of how to perform his masculinity in a market economy and yet who can see that Pip's choice is a bad one. Herbert takes the opportunity of Pip's confessing his love for Estella to give him a warning. He asks if Pip can "detach" himself from Estella, for he feels that Pip's attachment to Estella,

"having been so strongly rooted in the breast of a boy whom nature and circumstances made so romantic, renders it very serious. Think of her bringing-up, and think of Miss Havisham. Think of what she is herself . .
.. This may lead to miserable things."

"I know it, Herbert," said I, with my head still turned away, "but I can't help it."

"You can't detach yourself?"

"No. Impossible!" (251)

Herbert, who is a remarkably unrealistic social figure, looking about him and waiting for a prosperous career to fall into his lap, is able to see through the love story that Miss Havisham and Pip have written around Estella, and he recognizes that her part of the story is out of Pip's control. Estella will more than likely lead Pip on to "miserable things," a continuation of the misery that Pip feels upon first meeting her as a child – a

sense of his own worthlessness and inadequacy. In this passage, detachment as the cure for lost love returns to a nineteenth-century novel, but Herbert wishes to use the treatment as prevention instead of as cure. Here, detachment is as much the cure for love as for lovesickness, since Miss Havisham has been teaching Pip lovesickness as a way to love.

Pip, of course, is unwilling to detach himself from Estella, declaring his love to her only after he learns that he is losing his fortune and is unable to have her. Upon hearing that Estella is to marry the brutish Bentley Drummle, whom she holds in the “indifference of utter contempt” (363), Pip makes a plea for Estella to thwart her adopted mother’s plans and choose another man.

Estella, dearest dearest Estella, do not let Miss Havisham lead you into this fatal step. Put me aside forever – you have done so, I well know – but bestow yourself on some worthier person than Drummle. Miss Havisham gives you to him, as the greatest slight and injury that could be done to the many far better men who admire you, and to the few who truly love you. Among those few, there may be one who loves you as dearly, though he has not loved you as long, as I. Take him, and I can bear it better, for your sake! (363)

Pip makes this plea for Estella to marry a man who loves her, and the seeming disinterestedness of the plea, since all Pip’s hope of being with her is gone, is heart-rending. But for the mention that Pip makes of Miss Havisham’s purposes, the passage might actually reveal a Pip who, in truly loving Estella, desires her happiness more than

his own. Pip reads Drummle's unworthiness as a slight and injury to the "many far better men" who love her, and he is one of those men. Pip does not desire that Estella marry him, but that she marry a worthy man, in whose company, as one of many worthy men who love Estella, Pip can take a more comfortable place. His identity is so wrapped up in this love story that he doesn't need to win the girl to have good self-esteem, but the girl must prove that she has the capacity to pick a good man, or he has been devoted to a lesser goddess – one whose own worth is brought into question by her inability to understand the value of others.

This also explains the comic and somewhat bizarre posturing of Pip and Drummle at the Blue Boar before Pip goes to see Estella. Pip and Drummle ignore each other for a while, and then their interaction is quite funny. The narrator Pip records how Pip "planted myself side by side with Mr. Drummle, my shoulders squared and my back to the fire" (355). At which point Drummle begins "edging me a little away with his shoulder" (355), and Pip begins "edging *him* away with *my* shoulder" (355). After a minor dialogue in which Drummle insults Pip's part of the country, the two men openly stare at each other, sizing the other up: "Here Mr. Drummle looked at his boots, and I looked at mine, and then Mr. Drummle looked at my boots, and I looked at his" (355). Drummle asserts his greater value by his repeated announcements to the servant that he "dine[s] at the young lady's" (357), and Pip and Drummle remain for a long time at the fireplace, shoulder to shoulder, neither one willing to leave it first. Pip acknowledges that this might have lasted indefinitely: "How long we might have remained in this ridiculous position it is impossible to say, but for the incursion of the three thriving

farmers . . . who came into the coffee-room unbuttoning their great-coats and rubbing their hands, and before whom, as they charged the fire, we were obliged to give way” (357). Both men’s refusals to be the first to leave the fireplace and their sizing up of each other exhibit just how male suitors achieve self-worth – through competitive posturing and success with the lady. Pip feels a need to compete with Drummle in this scene, even though he knows that all hope of winning Estella is gone.

Estella asks Pip if they are to “part on this, you visionary boy – or man?” (364). Her inability to determine if he is a man or a child is hurtful, but it is in keeping with her understanding of his inability to make a place for himself in the world, relying on visions of his own making. Gribble asserts that Estella’s rejection of Pip is the “sharpest register that his dream has been, after all, a delusion” (133). Pip’s answer is indicative of the failure of his identity in the moment of his loss of love. He acknowledges his inability to see her with another man only after his portrayal of himself as shamed by her choice in husbands, “even if I remained in England and could hold my head up with the rest, how could I see you Drummle’s wife!” (364). Estella’s positing her belief that Pip will forget her in a week is followed by a speech from Pip, quite literary in nature, in which he declares his inability to forget her as it constantly reinforces how his love of her and conviction that she is valuable have formed a central part of his identity – a part that is scripted according to a romance story:

You are part of my existence, part of myself. You have been in every line
I have ever read, since I first came here, the rough common boy whose
poor heart you wounded even then. You have been in every prospect I

have ever seen since – on the river, on the sails of ships, on the marshes, in the clouds, in the light, in the darkness, in the wind, in the woods, in the sea, in the streets. You have been the embodiment of every graceful fancy that my mind has ever become acquainted with. The stones of which the strongest London buildings are made, are not more real, or more impossible to be displaced by your hands, than your presence and influence have been to me, there and everywhere, and will be. Estella, to the last hour of my life, you cannot choose but remain part of my character, part of the little good in me, part of the evil. But, in this separation I associate you only with the good, and I will faithfully hold you to that always, for you must have done me far more good than harm, let me feel now what sharp distress I may. (364-5)

Pip writes Estella into every line he has ever read and reads every line he has ever read onto her as well. He also demands Estella's continued presence in his life. He requires her participation in his life, for he can understand himself only in relationship to her. In the moment of Estella's marriage preparations to another man, however, a moment that should end their relationship, Pip declares that Estella "cannot choose but remain part of [his] character." Her lack of choice in their relationship is a continuation of their relationship as it has always been. The benefit of even lost love is that the lover may devote himself to an idea as easily as to a person, and the idea will never fade and never let him down. Gribble reads Pip's admission of love to Estella as "a veritable ecstasy" (137). Pip claims it to be a "rhapsody welled up within me, like blood from an inward

wound, and gushed out” (365). He understands his articulation of love at the moment of its loss as the draining of his lifeblood—his emotional heart to be broken in his youth.

A. L. French notes that Pip’s claim upon hearing of Estella’s engagement to Drummle that “‘you must have done me much more good than harm’ is poignant in its absurdity; the book has clearly shown his capacity for feeling and living to have been laid as waste as Satis House” (158). However, Pip is not altogether wrong here. After all, his anonymous benefactor Magwitch supplies Pip with “expectations” but not with reality. He gains an education, but not a vocation or an understanding of himself as anything other than a “gentleman.” Herbert’s constant corrections of his poor social skills, his inability to know what to do with the Avenger, and his need for education reinforce that he is not a gentleman. Pip’s identity is wrapped up in his devotion to Estella; she has provided him a purpose. If Pip is clinging to an identity as a Petrarchan lover, then he is successful not when his lady accepts him, but merely when she does not reject him. Pip’s fantasy can work perfectly in his relationship with Estella because she refuses to place him in the same context as her suitors thereby refusing to reject him. The poignancy of his admission of love to Estella is not in any attempt to win her himself, but is in how her choice of Drummle affects his identity. Pip is not judged according to his relationship to Estella, but according to his relationship with Estella’s other suitors. Their worth and valuation of Estella determines his company and his identity. Pip’s reaction to Estella’s announcement about Drummle is connected to his desire to keep better company himself. Of course, Drummle is the aristocrat, but Pip doesn’t want to be

like him, and certainly not worse than he is. If Estella would but choose a nobler-souled husband, then Pip's value would rise in comparison.

The text ends with a drawing together of the three major relationships to love in the novel: the grotesquely lovesick woman, the woman who cannot love, and the man who cannot stop loving. Pip absolves Miss Havisham from his broken heart:

It would have been cruel in Miss Havisham, horribly cruel, to practise on the susceptibility of a poor boy, and to torture me through all these years with a vain hope and an idle pursuit, if she had reflected on the gravity of what she did. But I think she did not. I think that in the endurance of her own trial, she forgot mine. (362)

Pip doesn't believe that Miss Havisham is responsible because she has been too focused on herself to know how miserable she has made him. It is quite a little protection for the lovesick woman that she is without moral obligations because her condition is so self-centered that she is not expected to think of others. While this is a selfishness that can easily be read as morally wrong, Pip chooses not to do so. Later, Miss Havisham summons Pip to her, and he stands before her thinking, "There was such an air of utter loneliness upon her, that would have moved me to pity though she had wilfully done me a deeper injury than I could charge her with" (395). Time has not changed his mind that her participation in lovesickness has rendered her incapable of plotting his own injury. Knoepflmacher notes, "Herself deserted by Estella, the self-betrayed Miss Havisham evokes in Pip a [genuine] compassion" (89), and "unfulfilled longing for – and betrayal

by – the opposite sex has created a bond between them” (89). Pip is compassionate to Miss Havisham, who cries and asks for Pip’s forgiveness.

Upon having his fears confirmed that Estella is indeed married to Drummle, however, Pip changes his mind. He blames Miss Havisham for stunting Estella’s growth; “That she had done a grievous thing in taking an impressionable child to mould into the form that her wild resentment, spurned affection, and wounded pride, found vengeance in, I knew full well” (399). Pip then blames Miss Havisham for her own pain: “But that, in shutting out the light of day, she had shut out infinitely more; that, in seclusion, she had secluded herself from a thousand natural and healing influences; that, her mind, brooding solitary, had grown diseased, as all minds do and must and will that reverse the appointed order of their Maker; I knew equally well” (399). Pip regards Miss Havisham as mentally ill with a mind “grown diseased,” yet he holds her responsible for her own illness, “And could I look upon her without compassion, seeing her punishment in the ruin she was, in her profound unfitness for this earth on which she was placed, in the vanity of sorrow which had become a master mania, like the vanity of penitence, the vanity of remorse, the vanity of unworthiness, and other monstrous vanities that have been curses in this world?” (399). Pip does not see any similarity between his own use of the conventions of romantic love as a technology of the self to establish a stable identity for himself and Miss Havisham’s participation in the conventions of literary lovesickness. He sees her participation in lovesickness as needing punishment, but Pip feels no need for additional vengeance because the lovesick woman punishes herself.

The vanity of sorrow, penitence, remorse and unworthiness is in their implicit impotence to change reality.

Pip never acknowledges that Miss Havisham has hurt him because he sees himself as the strong man protecting the weak, lovesick woman. He also gets to play out his protection of her after her dress catches fire, and he must put it out.⁶⁵ Frost writes that Pip's struggle with her in the fire scene enables him to release anger for her in physical violence (19). While their struggle as "desperate enemies" (402) is violent, Richard Witt quotes an 1847 cookery book that has directions for putting out a lady's dress that has caught fire: "A man may quickly strip off his coat and wrap it round the female" (154). Pip's actions are perfectly in keeping with what Witt labels an "accident [that] belongs to an ordinary pattern of events" (155). Pip is allowed to take control of Miss Havisham's person and her servants as never before, and Frost asserts that the fire allows "Pip to overcome Miss Havisham physically while he remains strong himself, recovering his psychic equilibrium while her mind breaks irretrievably. . . . Miss Havisham's words of horrified self-realization and her plea for absolution echo hauntingly from the tortured nerves of a broken eccentric" (19). Frost is correct that the fire produces a plotted cause for a change in Miss Havisham's character. Miss Havisham is forced to see that her identity has not been a curse upon Compeyson and Arthur, but upon Pip and Estella. Because of her burns, Miss Havisham is bandaged and now looks like a mummy-bride, and her doctors consider her condition "far from hopeless; the danger lay mainly in the nervous shock" (402). Pip will not be present when Miss Havisham dies, and as Frost notes, "presumably it is from the shock that she dies" (20).

Miss Havisham has to die, and the cause of that death has to be difficult to determine⁶⁶ – a *deus ex machina* to pull her out of the pages of this text. Dickens constructs her death so that she can still be read as having died primarily from lovesickness. She dies from a “nervous shock” that the reader can assume she is too sick to handle because of her prior condition.

Years later, after Pip has worked abroad and Estella’s husband has died, Pip and Estella meet once more at the ruins of Satis House, and Pip is impressed by the freshness of Estella’s beauty being replaced with “its indescribable majesty and its indescribable charm” (483). Estella has endured a marriage to a brute and is different. Pip is also struck by “the saddened softened light of the once proud eyes” and “the friendly touch of the once insensible hand” (483). Estella’s softness is combined with her confession that she thinks of him now in a way that she did not let herself think of him before: “There was a long hard time when I kept far from me, the remembrance of what I had thrown away when I was quite ignorant of its worth. But, since my duty has not been incompatible with the admission of that remembrance, I have given it a place in my heart” (484). Whether the “long hard time” Estella refers to was during her adopted mother’s life or during her marriage, her retrieval of an old memory to place in her heart shows that Estella has learned how to bolster her own self-worth through relationship to someone else who desires her. Estella also acknowledges that “suffering has been stronger than all other teaching, and has taught me to understand what your heart used to be. I have been bent and broken, but – I hope – into a better shape” (484).⁶⁷ Frost reads in this scene “a deep-seated fear of women. The strong women are created vividly and

are unquestionably memorable, but because their strength is negative and is associated with the ability to inflict pain on men, they must be ‘bent and broken’ (460) before they can win approval, before they can stop being outsiders and can achieve the proper, tensionless relationship with Pip” (16). Estella understands Pip’s point of view and understands how devoting himself to her gave him something to do and something to be because she seems to have used memories of Pip’s devotion to foster a healthier self-esteem for herself after what was clearly a destructive marriage. But her relationship with Pip is not tensionless. The Pip in the second ending and the grown-up, narrator Pip should have merged by the final scene, but Dickens is not writing a story of difficult love. Darby writes that, “Dickens resists genre, the story of the moral growth of the self-made gentleman as well as the story of love” (227). Estella’s last words, that she and Pip “will continue friends apart” (484) are vastly different from Pip’s last thought that he “saw the shadow of no parting from her” (484). As Gilchrist states, “although Pip has lost much of his grotesqueness, and although even Estella seems to have gained some humanity, there yet remains a great difference between the love that Pip desires from Estella and the ‘friendship apart’ which she offers him” (82). Dickens has established conventional love several times in this novel, always to thwart it, and an insistence on reading a marriage into the conclusion of this novel is a sign of the hold that the marriage plot and romance conventions in general had on nineteenth century readers and still have on readers today.

I would like to conclude this chapter with the another lovesick character mentioned in the novel.

Lastly Ophelia was a prey to such slow musical madness, that when, in course of time, she had taken off her white muslin scarf, folded it up, and buried it, a sulky man who had been long cooling his impatient nose against an iron bar in the front row of the gallery, growled, “Now the baby’s put to bed let’s have supper!” Which, to say the least of it, was out of keeping. (254)

The over-long, melodramatic and staged death of Ophelia in Mr. Wopsle’s performance of *Hamlet* that leads to audience participation in the theatre performance and the audience’s expressed desire for her speedier exit from the stage is an apt figuring of the way that lovesickness is treated in this novel. This scene is funny because the poor performance renders the performers ridiculous. The scene is not funny because it is the depiction of an audience member’s rejection of an artist’s performance. Even though the audience member is right to criticize a horrible performance of lovesickness, he is in turn rejected by the rest of the audience and labeled “sulky.” Dickens’s establishment of lovesickness makes just as much a mockery of conventional lovesickness as Mr. Wopsle’s troupe’s terrible performance does of one of the most poignant examples of literary lovesickness. Miss Havisham lingers in this book well past her life’s end at twenty to nine on her wedding day, when she shuts up her house and stops the clocks; she even lingers past a severe burn in another medical condition of the nerves. Miss Havisham’s story just won’t end, and that is part of the power of lovesickness—not that the person who performs it actually has to be lovesick, but that, lovesick, she has center stage and can allow her performance to stop the progress of the rest of the story,

focusing all eyes on herself, ultimately enjoying the power of making time stand still and figuring her victimage for even the densest eyes to see. Any spectator who is unappreciative of the performance labels himself a sulky Philistine and opens himself up to the censure of the rest of society. Dickens's use of lovesickness is just as serious a performance of literary tradition as Shakespeare's and just as funny a performance as Mr. Wopsle's troupe's.

CHAPTER V

FEMALE LOVESICKNESS TODAY

“Well, he loves me. He was on the verge of telling me when his father burst in. I felt listless after he left and had some sort of headache, so I must be in love as well. I must confess I expected love to feel somewhat different than this. I may determine how deep a love I feel through his absence.” (*Emma*, McGrath, 1996)

In the 1996 movie *Emma*, Gwenneth Paltrow plays Emma Woodhouse, diagnosing her love for Frank Churchill through her completely unrelated symptoms of mild ill health. The idea of love being diagnosed through physical symptoms attendant on a woman's loss of love is made more ridiculous in the twentieth century by Emma's expectations that love should “feel somewhat different than this” – an expectation not expressed in the Austen text. Contrary to the Austen text, Paltrow is playing an Emma who is not seeking to avoid the marriage plot for the sake of her father and who expects to know she is in love by how she feels in her lover's presence, yet who, like the character in the Austen text, is still only capable of diagnosing her lovesickness at his removal from her society.

Paltrow also performs another heroine discussed in this dissertation, Estella, in the 1998 movie *Great Expectations*. This version of the film transplants the story to American soil, contrasting an impoverished coastal Florida with a decadent New York City. Dickens's Estella understands love only as a “form of words,” but Paltrow's Estella understands love enough to wield her sexuality with cruelty, never warning an idealistic

Finn (the film's Pip character) against including her in his "expectations." Dickens's Estella tells a story about a girl raised to fear sunlight and always fearing sunlight even when she is later told to go out in it. Dickens's Estella uses this analogy to explain her inability to return even Miss Havisham's obsessive love. Paltrow's Estella uses the same analogy to explain herself to Finn, but this conversation takes place after she has declared Finn to be her "childhood love" (*Great Expectations*, Cuarón, 1998) and then surprised him with an introduction to a man with whom she has a serious relationship. Paltrow's Estella does not understand love merely as a form of words, which she refuses to use out of some sort of integrity. Instead, Paltrow's Estella is knowingly cruel to Finn, using her sexuality and his tendency to believe that she feels more for him than she does to get what she wants out of him. Ultimately, the movie portrays Estella as a woman in denial about her place in the love story, and the movie ends with Estella asking for Finn's forgiveness for her mistreatment of him. The director needed Gwyneth Paltrow to play this part because it took an actress known for her soft look and romantic roles to make the contrast between what she usually plays with this director's vision of an intentionally cruel Estella. Not only did the director need Paltrow to make his Estella's behavior to the loving Finn shocking, but he needed Paltrow's association with romantic roles to pull off her apology at the end that rewrites Dickens's vision into the twentieth century by reinserting Estella into a romantic context: a context that allows Estella to be read as always loving Finn but confused about her feelings and remorseful about that confusion.

An Emma who never loses the man she loves and who submits to passivity and propriety to win her lover and a sexually aggressive, emotionally void Estella, who marries a man she doesn't love and asks forgiveness from the man she does love, seem very different roles. But their complementarity can be seen in their emotional suitability for a leading lady famous for her romantic roles and in the extent to which both characters understand lovesickness as a technology of the self. Paltrow's Emma can diagnose herself as in love with Churchill because she can amuse herself with the idea of being in love while putting herself in no danger of falling in love. Paltrow's Estella can gain power over Finn by naming him her childhood love because her use of the word "love" is driven by her understanding of love as a weapon. The twentieth century may no longer be able to understand a woman expressing her thwarted love in sickness, but the modern audience is very able to understand the nature of the woman in an aberrant relationship to love as a woman who is trying to take control of her life. While we may no longer empathize completely with the physical components of lovesickness, illness does change the way we feel for a heroine. A meddling Emma who has a headache can be clever and amusing, while a meddling Estella who is the picture of health is in desperate need of apologizing for her behavior.

Nineteenth-century novelists saw literary lovesickness as a disease that affects female characters at the loss of love and often manifests itself in fever. Because the novelists wrote love, the love in the nineteenth-century novel is not real. Dickens's Estella is correct in proclaiming novelistic love to be a form of words. Estella means that the language of love is a form of words in contrast to an empirical reality. In the

nineteenth-century novel, the rhetoric of love is intimately related to the rhetoric of lovesickness and, therefore, the form of words that controls the story of love in the nineteenth-century British novel is a form of words that controls the lovesick heroine's body. The language of lovesickness is a rhetoric that presents a physical reality to the female character experiencing the loss of love, to other characters around her, and to the readers of her novel. The physicality of lovesickness in the nineteenth-century novel, in combining the story of love with a medical history, enables a lady to embrace an identity as an invalid, which allows her to receive the care of others at the same time that she strengthens her identity as a victimized woman in love. The rhetoric of love and the symptoms of lovesickness combine into a form of power with which a woman can control her sense of self, even if she is not conscious of her actions and power. A sophisticated female character who is aware that lovesickness is a means of establishing herself a social context with the man she desires makes of lovesickness a technology of the self. A heroine can use lovesickness, modifying her body, her mind, and her behavior, to determine her identity in relation to an all-encompassing love, even if her lover ends their relationship and the female character's identity as jilted becomes blighting to her health or happiness. A heroine who understands lovesickness to be a technology of the self must negotiate social guilt for gaining power and status and care through her love-related illnesses.

The nineteenth-century novelist empowers him or herself to confront contemporary social understandings of heterosexual love, illness, and the female body through a sophisticated incorporation of lovesickness in the text. Austen, Dickens, and

Gaskell reveal how the need to diagnose the loss of love makes lovesickness more than a biological disease. Lovesickness becomes the means of establishing female identity as something that must be read in relation to the marriage plot. The three novelists discussed in this dissertation all make lovesickness a technology of the self as well. The novelists present certain characters as naturally succumbing to lovesickness and other characters as participating in lovesickness for their own good. All three novelists understand that they can attach a moral to nineteenth-century lovesickness, and they use lovesickness to shape the lives of their female characters as they hope that the lives of their female characters will shape their readers' attitudes and social expectations.

In *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma*, Jane Austen presents nineteenth-century lovesickness as a part of a culturally pervasive love story in which all female characters must participate, even though the female characters can choose whether or not they display or conceal the symptoms of lovesickness on their bodies. Austen stands several cultural assumptions about female love in opposition to each other, destabilizing the possibility of a normative experience for the woman in love. The marriage plot is the pervasive love story amongst Austen's female characters; thus, a heroine's love that does not culminate in her marriage severely strains her sense of self. A woman in Austen's novels knows she is being watched and is aware that she chooses the face she presents to society. The lovesick woman has the power to re-code her relationship with a man in the language of and according to the story of love, thereby rewriting herself as culturally important and deserving of care or as heroically self-sacrificing. Important to a study of an Austenian heroine is an understanding of that heroine's experience with love, loss,

and social position. The way that the Austenian female character interacts with an unavoidable loss of love is a key to her character. We read an Austenian character's moral and social value through the way she exhibits and conceals heartache. Marianne Dashwood allows her lovesickness to affect her status and her treatment among her acquaintance, which Austen tags as an inappropriate usurpation of social importance. When she reveals and when she conceals her heartache, Elinor Dashwood fulfills her social obligations to those around her, which Austen not only tags as proper but also uses to mark Elinor's quotidian behavior as heroic.

Gaskell writes two types of female lovesickness into her novel *Ruth*: one is a female character's chosen rewriting of a non-romantic encounter into a romantic one and the other is the unavoidable and spontaneous bodily response to the loss of love. The second of these types of lovesickness is not farcical and is not the heroine's choice. Unaware of any social interest in the love story, the heroine who contracts lovesickness is rendered incapable of helping herself. A female character's social class is elevated by her participation in lovesickness. Gaskell uses this trait to confuse Victorian ideals of class and sickness, allowing her lovesick characters to bridge the gap between classes and to perform Victorian social work. Gaskell's lovesick woman is capable of great change, which is why Gaskell's lovesick woman is the Victorian social worker who reveals to an uncompassionate Victorian society that a heroine's cultural salvation is both justified and assured by her ability to sicken repeatedly for love. Important to a study of Gaskell is an understanding that she uses a female character's sickening in

response to the loss of love as a sign of innate personal humility, social goodness, and social worth.

Unlike Austen and Gaskell, who focus on the conjunction between a heroine's moments of physical weakness and moments of emotional intensity, Charles Dickens refuses to incorporate a medically established physical lovesickness into the story of the lovesick lady in *Great Expectations*. Instead, Dickens writes a jilted woman who focuses the reader's attention on the expression of her staged lovesickness. Thus, the lovesick woman calculates the spectacle she produces for others and watches her effect on others. The grotesquely lovesick woman tires of her performances of lovesickness, but she finds the participation in lovesickness too valuable to stop. She controls how others read her death and thus how others evaluate the guilt of the man who jilted her. Dickens establishes the lovesick mother as the cause of the loveless daughter. He places both mother and daughter outside the nineteenth-century social love story for women and relentlessly re-orient them in it to their detriment. The lovesick mother is never able to move on with her life, and the loveless daughter is never able to find herself, never intending to define herself in relation to a man. The male character who tries to protect these women finds the choice to live in an aberrant relationship with the story of love to be limiting and blighting. Important to a study of Dickens is an understanding that the physicality of lovesickness is significant in determining whether or not a female character's response to love and to the loss of love is sympathetic.

While sickening for love is not simple to reproduce on the twentieth-century screen, the connection between the medical establishment and a perpetuation of the story

of lovesickness does not end in nineteenth-century England. In the week before Valentine's Day in 2005, every major news outlet (and most minor ones) reported on a finding to be released in the February 10th issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine* that researchers from the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine discovered the ability of a stress disorder to imitate a heart attack and even cause death. MSN online, for example, made available a February 9th article from *HealthDay News* entitled, "Sometimes a Heart Attack Is Really a 'Broken Heart,'" and the Bryan/College Station newspaper *The Eagle* printed in the top and center of the front page on February 10th a teaser headline that read "Heartbreak Can Be Fatal."

The Eagle also printed on its front page as an explanation of its page three article that "Scientists confirm the lament of countless love sonnets and romance novels: People really can die of a broken heart" ("*Study*," A1). The newspaper's editor embedded a connection between literature and medicine in the article teaser, hoping that the mystique of the tragic love story and of lovesickness would cause the paper's readership to turn to page three or would even cause those passing the newsstand to buy the paper. In a similar manner, I suspect that the appearance of this study about the "broken heart" in the issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine* that is closest to Valentine's Day is no coincidence. After all, the *Journal* was able to get its research discussed not only by the professionals who subscribe to and read the journal, but also among a much broader group of people with no involvement in the medical profession. A syndrome about the "broken heart" allows information about a medical disorder to be spread farther and quicker than if the syndrome had been released under a less romantic name.

Unfortunately, the romance of the lovesickness story overcame the actual facts of the syndrome. *The Eagle*'s front-page title "Heartbreak Can Be Fatal" gave way to a third-page article reprinted from the *Washington Post* entitled, "Study says dying of a broken heart is possible." This article opens with an awareness of the timing of the story as well as a restatement of the explanation used on the front page; "As Valentine's Day approaches, scientists have confirmed the lament of countless love sonnets and romance novels: People really can die of a broken heart, and the researchers now think they know why" ("Study," A3). Thus far, this article mentions only broken hearts and literature as the focus of the scientists. The next sentence provides the medical explanation of the syndrome; "A traumatic breakup, the death of a loved one or even the shock of a surprise party can unleash a flood of stress hormones that can stun the heart, causing sudden, life-threatening heart spasm in otherwise healthy people" ("Study," A3). Reading quickly over the triggers that can produce a "broken heart" makes the list provided in this article seem completely related to stories of love and being loved, but "the shock of a surprise party" has nothing to do with breakups or a loved one's death. The surprise party may have to do with the "stress hormones" that are shown to affect the heart, but not with the literary breaking hearts that were referenced in the article teaser and repeated in the first sentence of the article.

Ed Edelson's *HealthDay* article, available on MSN online, also begins with metaphors of love and loss, but it presents a medical perspective more quickly and in more depth. Edelson's article begins, "It seems the heart can really break, although it can also recover rapidly from the damage wrought by a sudden emotional shock." This

article expands its understanding of the “broken heart” in the first sentence, qualifying it as a “sudden emotional shock.” Again leading with ideas of lovesickness over the medical analysis that follows, Edelson reports that Johns Hopkins scientists have discovered “broken heart syndrome,” a condition that “can trigger severe, temporary heart muscle weakness that mimics a classic heart attack.” The name of the syndrome obscures that it has more to do with shock than with lost love. The article proceeds to describe the nineteen patients who participated in the study as “almost all ... women, who were hospitalized with all the symptoms of a heart attack, including chest pain, shortness of breath, fluid in the lungs and drastically reduced ability of the heart to pump blood.” The reader is not yet told what precipitated the onset of the near heart attacks; however, the article’s focus thus far leads the reader to assume that profound lovesickness causes this near heart attack in women.

The article further asserts that the condition is “temporary, caused by a massive release of stress hormones called catecholamines that can ‘stun’ the heart. They include adrenaline, and flood the body following emotional shocks.” The article lists the trigger of this condition to be not love, but shock, “ranging from news of a loved one’s death, to an armed robbery, to an auto accident.” The death of a loved one may be a catalyst for this syndrome, but the loved one’s death is not the trigger as much as hearing the news of the death unexpectedly. Patients entered the hospital believing they were having heart attacks, but tests showed “no physical signs of heart damage” as would occur in a heart attack. In fact, “[r]ather than requiring the drastic treatment necessary for a heart attack, the patients needed only supportive therapy for a few days to allow the heart to recover.”

Dr. Marc S. Penn is quoted in this article as saying that this report should “lead to more questioning of patients before the physician comes up with a diagnosis,” and Edelson asserts, “It also should prompt more measurements to detect elevated levels of stress hormones” as a more specific history and detection of elevated stress hormones could save a patient from unnecessary procedures like having a defibrillator implanted. After an attack of “broken heart syndrome” the heart quickly returns to normal functioning without sustaining tissue damage. The condition of the patients in this study “improved considerably in a few days, and they recovered completely within two weeks.” Thus, news of an unexpected death causes a stress response that corrects itself in two weeks’ time. We are not to expect that the patients have equally recovered from their grief, yet linking this stress disorder with the literary association of the broken heart almost implies that successful treatment of the organ would also cure the emotional “heart.”

The article that began the media frenzy – “Neurohumoral Features of Myocardial Stunning Due to Sudden Emotional Stress,” appearing in the February 10, 2005, issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine* begins with one sentence that refers to broken hearts. It reads, “The potentially lethal consequences of emotional stress are deeply rooted in folk wisdom, as reflected by phrases such as ‘scared to death’ and ‘a broken heart’” (Wittstein, et al 540). The ten co-authors of this article refer not to sonnets and romance novels, but to idioms that they call “folk wisdom.” These authors also prioritize the phrase “scared to death” over the phrase “a broken heart” by listing it first. There is no other reference to a broken heart in this article, and unlike Ed Edelson’s article, it does not name the phenomenon that they have researched “broken heart syndrome,”

referring to it mostly as “stress cardiomyopathy” (Wittstein, et al 540). The *NEJM* article does explain the authors’ hope that physicians will consider alternate methods of care for patients with stress-induced symptoms. The authors suggest that doctors consider stress cardiomyopathy as a diagnosis when they are provided the following presenting symptoms:

In the absence of critical coronary arterial disease, . . . when the history taking reveals that cardiac symptoms were precipitated by intense emotional stress, when there is a unique pattern of left ventricular dysfunction characterized by apical and midventricular contractile abnormalities with sparing of the basal segments, and when there is minimal elevation of cardiac enzymes despite the presence of large regions of focal akinesis in the myocardium. (Wittstein, et al 547)

It is important for patients to tell their doctors when their symptoms of heart attack were preceded by emotional stress. The doctor must know that the patient has received a shock in order to know to test the patient’s levels of cardiac enzymes and in order to notice the “unique pattern” of the left ventricle’s pumping. The doctor needs the patient’s cooperation to discover this illness.

Knowledge of emotional shocks is important to physicians’ accurate diagnosis of stress cardiomyopathy, but what is interesting to me about this is that if the doctor knows you have sustained emotional trauma, your prognosis is better than if you are just having a heart attack. In fact, instead of saying that broken hearts kill people, the authors of this text make it clear that the broken hearts they’ve studied are all recovery stories. The

patients' recoveries were quick and seemingly complete. The authors write, "In the four years that we have followed these patients, none have died, had a recurrence, or had a decline in left ventricular function" (Wittstein, et al 574). Ironically, the point of the *NEJM* article seems not to be, "Beware, you can die of a broken heart," as much as, "If a broken heart prompted an imitation heart attack in you, and your correct diagnosis leads to prompt treatment, you will live and without having to undergo invasive procedures."

In order to make an important medical fact known to the public (that the person with symptoms of a heart attack should tell her physician if it is preceded by emotional stress), the media coverage emphasized the connection between a medical finding and the literary tradition of lovesickness and in doing so they have exhibited for us just how much we still want to believe in the power of the lovesickness tradition. We are so attracted to the idea that love is the thing for which life is worth living that we are willing to read articles about broken hearts and dying for love right before Valentine's Day. Theories of lovesickness are also attractive because we know the loss of love to be traumatic, and we desire that trauma to be validated. We desire validation of our pain in sickness and validation of our search for treatment and cure. Twenty-first-century medicine does not yet validate lovesickness by reference to it in medical journals or the DSM-IV, but the press coverage of "broken heart syndrome" suggests that the public has faith in a correlation between the metaphorical heart and the fleshly body and that they are merely awaiting the day that the medical profession will be able to explain lovesickness and to treat it.

Until twenty-first-century medicine does validate individual experiences with lovesickness, I think that popular versions of the story of thwarted love and illness will continue to be produced. Criticizing her sister's choice of suitors, Kate Winslet's Marianne in the 1995 film *Sense and Sensibility* disparages Edward's "polite affections" (*Sense and Sensibility*, Lee, 1995) to her mother and defines a love that she sees as attractive.

"To love is to burn – to be on fire – like Juliet, or Guinevere, or Eloise."

"They made rather pathetic ends, dear."

"Pathetic!? To die for love. How can you say so? What could be more glorious?"

"I think that may be taking your romantic sensibilities a little far." (*Sense and Sensibility*, Lee, 1995)

This conversation, which does not occur in Austen's text, combines both attitudes that the twentieth century has towards lovesickness. Winslet's Marianne is idealistic and passionate, and she describes love as a feeling of heat. She confines love to only three women's experiences. Mrs. Dashwood in Austen's novel assures her daughter that she will be able to have all her expectations met in a love relationship, but this Mrs. Dashwood revises Winslet's Marianne's ideal female lovers, naming their fates "pathetic" and cautioning her daughter that she is exaggerating her "romantic sensibilities." Winslet's Marianne even giggles in implicit agreement with her mother's correction of her. Yet, Winslet's Marianne's beauty, youth, and excitement over burning with "glorious" love is not diminished by her laughing agreement with her mother. I

believe that the need for the medical establishment to validate lovesickness goes hand in hand with our desire to experience a love that burns and to forget our mothers' warnings to keep our heads as we lose our hearts. What we desire is not sensible love so much as the safety net of medical treatment for our decisions to throw ourselves headlong into our passions.

NOTES

1. Wack notes that Galen is a good source of medical literature on lovesickness, but that Galen's writings were lost to the Europeans, while they informed Arabic writings about lovesickness. Galen recorded the first case of lovesickness in a woman. Galen wrote of the senator Justus's wife falling ill over inappropriate love for a male dancer, which would have required infidelity and would have crossed "very strong class barriers" (9). Greek medicine provided this one example of a woman suffering from lovesickness, but "it was a thousand years before the medical community again pursued the question of women's lovesickness" (9).
2. Most notably, Wack suggests the texts that informed early European lovesickness were from Ovid and the Bible (5).
3. Beecher and Ciavolella mention the various sources that informed Ferrand's treatises. "Physicians writing on insane love early in the sixteenth century traditionally placed their modest chapters in company with those on melancholy, mania, hysteria, and lycanthropy in a way that suggested close pathological relationships among them to later observers....[Avicenna] recommends baths and topicals, defamation of the desired object, and, with a view both to therapy and to evacuation, coitus; he has little to say about purges. By slow degrees the influence of Galenic analysis, with its emphasis on purges and internal alteratives, brought the Arabic approach to the curing of love under examination. Through a subtle redefinition of the disease, the purges and alternatives gained in status over the "methodical" cures such as moral counsel, travel, or social distractions, so that by the late sixteenth century those physicians who objected to coitus as a treatment on the grounds of Christian morality and the integrity of the profession had strong alternative cures to offer in the form of more direct pharmaceutical assaults upon the imbalanced humors and upon the surfeit of seed. The ascendancy of Galenic theories provided the first incentive to reexamine the methods for dealing with love, with such as Luis Mercado in the vanguard, later echoed by Rodrigo de Castro and Andre Du Laurens. A second incentive emerged with Francois Valleriola's *Observationum medicinalium libri sex* published in 1558. This writer looked, not to the Arabian physicians or to Galen for his etiological study of eros, but to Marsilio Ficino in his *Commentaries on Plato's Symposium on Love*. Valleriola devised an uncomfortable conflation of the Platonic theory of love as a form of fascination entering through the eyes and the Galenic theories of humoral physiopsychology. Yet so confirmed a Galenist as Du Laurens allowed himself to subscribe, some nine years later, to this theory favored by poets and Neoplatonists; it soon became a permanent aspect of the anatomization of erotic love. The infiltration of Ficino into French medicine was symptomatic of a general broadening of the analysis of the physiology of love that incorporated materials from a number of distinct medical and philosophical schools ancient and modern. The time had

become ripe for eclectic, full-length studies that would attempt to absorb the parallel literary and mythological lore into the medical modes of discourse. That challenge was taken up by Jean Aubery in 1599, by Jean de Veyries in 1609, by Jacques Ferrand in 1610 (the date of the publication of his first treatise on love melancholy), and nearly simultaneously in England by Robert Burton, whose first edition of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* was published in Oxford in 1621” (Beecher and Ciavolella 9-10).

4. Men do not experience lovesickness or a devaluing love in the same way. Men gain value by claiming to have less value than their beloveds. Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s female speaker in *Sonnets from the Portuguese* follows this male tradition of prizing the beloved above oneself and eventually establishes her own value by her ability to see, to love, and to write about the beloved. She usurps the beloved’s status when the beloved returns her affections.
5. Benedict writes, “This problem is epitomized by the contradiction between the sympathetic portrayal of Marianne, and the unflagging praise for her opposite, the ‘sensible’ sister Elinor” (453).
6. Marianne Dashwood is notably distressed that anyone would think that she is “setting her cap” for any man (38). While her distress may reveal her defiance of a social assumption about the way single women approach single men, her rejection of an attitude towards marriage proves that the expectation exists.
7. Claudia L. Johnson defines the sentimental tradition as one that ensures that women will be silenced (166).
8. O’Farrell discusses Barthes’ theories of pleasure and Foucault’s theories of power to orient the blush as that which generates story and that which generates story that is pleasurable (6-7). Mrs. Jennings enjoys raising blushes in order to participate in the traditional love story by controlling the characters in it.
9. Gregory reminds his daughters to bear every sorrow in silence “unknown and unpitied,” presenting a cheerful face to all (11).
10. The narrator appears to be in agreement with Thomas Gisborne, who in 1797 declared that a lady falling into hysterics for lack of getting her way was a thing of the past (252). Men seemed to already have a fear of women gaining power and getting their way through imitations of illness.
11. Thomas Gisborne writes both that girls should not enter all society, but that upon coming out, they should have their society just as carefully chosen as it was before in their own homes (98) and that at a ball, indiscriminate familiarity may not be shown to all partners (185). Marianne flouts the conventions that would protect her from forming an attachment to Willoughby too quickly, even praising her ability to be familiar with him without having known him long.
12. Phoebe A. Smith notes that “the ease with which Fanny undermines John’s benevolent intentions, Austen appears to support the view held by philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes and Bernard de Mandeville that humans are naturally

- selfish, rather than naturally benevolent as posited, for example, by the Third Earl of Shaftesbury” (7-8).
13. Phoebe A. Smith acknowledges another perspective by writing that “Alistair M. Duckworth argues that Austen accommodates, rather than challenges, the system in which she and her characters are enmeshed. That is, she negotiates within reality. The novel can be read as an example of this strategy. Rather than arguing overtly to change the structures that depend on benevolent paternalism, her heroines decorously skirt the formidable obstacles in their portionless path” (19).
 14. This plays out in *Persuasion* as well, where as Mary Ann O’Farrell notes Anne Elliot must regain her bloom to be returned to the marriage plot (51).
 15. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Darcy explains his and Bingley’s sister’s departure from Netherfield to London as an attempt at “detaching” (131) Bingley from Jane’s charms and influence.
 16. Christine Richards presents the critical history behind Marianne’s illness: “Initially the dominant view [Tanner, Introduction 13] was that Marianne suffers from one illness, pathological and psychosomatic in origin, with bouts of incoherence of mind and catatonic trances. Toby Olshin turned the direction away from a thoroughgoing psychiatric interpretation by putting forth the view that Marianne suffers two illnesses, a nervous one followed by a physical one. But this change in interpretative emphasis has not been sustained. A return to predominantly internalist psychiatric interpretations has taken place over the last two decades with Marianne’s reaction to her frustrated love affair being variously described as raving and being brought to the brink of madness and death [Leighton 136; Steele 154], manifesting symptoms of hysteria and asthenia (weakness and loss of energy) [Kaplan and Kaplan 126], as psychosomatic [Gorman 54], as a flight into illness [Gross 195], and as a declining into a state of hysterical debility [Small 89]” (84).
 “Tony Tanner says that ‘Marianne’s illness is clearly psychosomatic and in many of its symptoms . . . her behaviour is pathological in a way which for the late eighteenth century could have been construed as madness’” (Kaplan and Kaplan 125). Kaplan and Kaplan note the importance of remembering, however, that “what we call psychosomatic disease was not a concept prior to Freud, or at least prior to the turn of the century” and that those “who say that Marianne is exhibiting signs of madness might be interested in the fact that such symptoms as ‘head-aches, languor, occasional loss of memory, depression of mind, [and] aversion for amusement’ were associated as well with ‘rheumatic complaints’ and were thought to be treatable with ‘a few leeches, cupping blisters, &c.’ to ‘reduce the morbid action in the brain’” (125).
 17. Captain Wentworth is also trapped into a relationship with Louisa Musgrove before an actual proposal because of his imprudent attentions to her. If she had

- recovered from her fall at Lyme with a continued desire to marry him, he would have been honor-bound to marry her.
18. Susan Morgan asserts that “Austen has declared at the beginning of the novel that Elinor’s feelings are “strong,” not that they are asleep” (189).
 19. Litvak describes how Catherine Moreland changes her focus in reading in a way similar to what Marianne must learn in order to allow herself a reason to live; “Catherine Moreland, I argue, gets ahead by learning to transform the paranoia she has cultivated as a reader of Gothic novels into the more prestigious, proto-Foucauldian paranoia she might derive from reading books of history. The charm of this transformation, like that of the new historicism itself, consists in the possibility of combining the pleasure of literature with the authority of history” (16).
 20. Deborah Kaplan, in “Achieving Authority: Jane Austen’s First Published Novel,” also notes that Marianne “imagines, in effect, the hero of a romance” (541).
 21. Gregory asserts that “[w]e so naturally associate the idea of female softness and delicacy with a correspondent delicacy of constitutions, that when a woman speaks of her great strength, her extraordinary appetite, her ability to bear excessive fatigue, we recoil at the description in a way she is little aware of” (50-1). Ruth’s refinement is more akin to the middle and upper class women than to working-class women.
 22. Ruth’s poor clothes reveal poverty and modesty. The attractiveness of women’s modesty is described by Gregory, who states, “A fine woman shews her charms to most advantage, when she seems most to conceal them” (56).
 23. Mary Ann O’Farrell notes that the problem of the blush is that it may respond either to deep personal truth or to outward pressure (111), and it is impossible to tell the difference. Thus, the blush has the dual significance that can be read however the person seeing the blush wishes to read it or however the person seeing the blush is used to reading blushes.
 24. Laughter can be as interpretable as blushing; Gregory reveals the complicated interpretation that laughter requires by the onlooker: “Sometimes a girl laughs with all the simplicity of unsuspecting innocence, for no other reason but being infected with other people’s laughing: she is then believed to know more than she should do – If she does happen to understand an improper thing, she suffers a very complicated distress: she feels her modesty hurt in the most sensible manner, and at the same time is ashamed of appearing conscious of the injury” (59-60). Ruth shows that she possesses unsuspecting innocence when she neither exhibits or manufactures self-consciousness about Bellingham.
 25. A conduct book like Dr. Gregory’s *A Father’s Legacy to His Daughters* teaches behavioral codes according to what is known to be “natural” in proper ladies – a category which excludes working-class women from its discourse. Gregory asserts that “I do not want to *make* you any thing: I want to know what Nature has made you, and to perfect you on her plan” (54-55); however, Gregory writes

- in his introduction that “from the view I have given of your natural character and *place in society*, there arises a certain propriety of conduct peculiar to your sex” (*emphasis mine*; 7). Gregory may insist that he is studying “natural” behavior in the female sex, but even he notes that nature and “place in society” are equal determinants of propriety. As Armstrong and Tennenhouse have noted, middle-class girls are expected to be sure they know what it is natural for them to be and to exhibit those naturally proper behaviors. Gaskell capitalizes on the ideologies of the conduct book in her portrayal of a working-class girl with a naturally middle or upper-class disposition and lovesick tendencies.
26. This is another example of Ruth’s showing feminine propriety. Gregory tells his daughters, “You must bear your sorrows in silence, unknown and unpitied” (11). Ruth does not disrupt Bellingham by any knowledge of her emotional pains.
 27. Miss Jessie Brown from Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cranford* fights off her symptoms of grief and fatigue that she felt at her father’s funeral for the sake of nursing her sister at her death.
 28. My understanding of reform venues for fallen women is from Judith Walkowitz’s *Prostitution and Victorian Society*.
 29. Benson’s “unfortunate fall” may be a play on the Fortunate Fall, which was the first sin and fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, dubbed “Fortunate” because the first sin led to Christ’s crucifixion and thus to the salvation of the world. In a similar manner, Gaskell has a preacher’s accidental, and thus “unfortunate,” fall lead to the social redemption of her lovesick, fallen heroine.
 30. Austen carefully embeds the physical causes of Marianne Dashwood’s fever in *Sense and Sensibility*, and Kaplan and Kaplan note the accuracy of the treatments that Austen has Elinor Dashwood and Mrs. Jennings early provide to Marianne (117).
 31. According to Gaskell’s letters to Dickens about the prostitute Pasley, the penitentiary system is not good for reform. Gaskell is concerned about Pasley leaving the prison, “for she comes out of prison on Wednesday, & there are two of the worst women in the town who have been in prison with her, intending to way-lay her, and I want to keep her out of all temptation, and even chance of recognition” (Chapple and Pollard 99). By this desire to keep Pasley away from these women who desire to “way-lay” and tempt her, Gaskell reiterates the idea she expressed earlier that Pasley is in danger of corruption, not an agent of it. She again stresses Pasley’s weakness, vulnerability, and need for protection from her corrupt environment.
 32. William Acton was a Victorian doctor, who specialized in sex organs and who wrote *Prostitution, Considered in Its Moral, Social, and Sanitary Aspects, in London and Other Large Cities and Garrison Towns, with Proposals for the Control and Prevention of Its Attendant Evils* before Parliament enacted the Contagious Disease Acts.

33. I believe that we see a similar hope given to Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Marion from *Aurora Leigh* at the news of her pregnancy.
34. Sophia Andres writes, "By transforming Pre-Raphaelite pictorial, static representations of women into narrative, dynamic images in *Ruth*, Gaskell breaks the silence of passive female figures, giving them, and by extension her readers, the voice to resist the dominant tradition, the power to become social agents of change" (40).
35. After reading a synopsis of the novel, Charlotte Brontë wrote to Gaskell, saying, "Why should she die? Why are we to shut up the book weeping? My heart fails me at the thought of the pang it will have to undergo. And yet you must follow the impulse of your own imagination. If *that* commands the slaying of the victim no bystander has the right to put out his hand to stay the sacrificial knife, but I hold you a stern priestess in these matters" (132).
36. Nancy Henry notes that this painting does not actually exist (390).
37. Freeland reminds us that "the novel's explicit providential plotting is undercut by its actual narrative sequence: long before Ruth's fall *resulted in* her social problems it *resulted from* them, since she succumbed to her seducer only because she was already jobless, friendless, and broke" (810).
38. I find it interesting that Gaskell was so interested in the story and in the reformation of Pasley, who was Irish, and yet, in this story that fictionalizes the dilemma of unprotected, working-class girls in city apprenticeships, not only is Ruth very much an English girl, but Gaskell either reveals a significant prejudice toward the Irish or capitalizes on the common prejudice to grant her heroine more social approbation. She attempts to heal one social prejudice, untroubled by the presence of another in her text.
39. Martha Vicinus discusses the reform of nursing that occurs after *Ruth* is written; "Nursing was to be turned into a profession for single women of impeccable moral standards. Nurses who drank, accepted tips, catered to the whims of favorite patients, and lacked training were to be replaced by devoted and disciplined paragons of womanly service...in the course of time nursing did become a respectable occupation for educated single women" (85). M. Jeanne Peterson also discusses the "old system of nursing" against which were leveled "charges of drunkenness and immorality" (181). At the time Gaskell is writing *Ruth*, nursing was neither a profession nor an acceptable job for respectable ladies.
40. Barbara Thaden notes that Gaskell "offer[s] a maternal perspective on the role of the dead mother by insisting that the dead mother did indeed play a significant role in her child's life while she was alive, and that the memory of a good mother continues to influence not only a child's life but also an adult's" (32).
41. Margaret Flanders Darby focuses on Pip's use of the word "jargon" to describe his labeling Estella's heart as necessary to her beauty and notes, "Mr. Pirrip's choice of 'jargon' suggests some awareness that not only is Pip's language at

- cross purposes with Estella's, but that his is the rhetoric to be found wanting" (221).
42. In "Devoured Hearts in *Great Expectations*," Anya Taylor notes that Pip has a very physical understanding of the heart, stemming from his earliest memories with the convict in the cemetery, who threatens to rip his heart out and eat it. Taylor also notes that Joe "reserves the word 'heart' for feelings, and does not give it physical form" (67-8). Here, we see that Estella also clearly understands the heart in relation to feelings and disavows having the organ because of her lack of corresponding emotion. It is Estella who must explain the heart to Pip separately as an organ and as the seat of the emotions, claiming the presence of one and the absence of the other. Pip can only understand the physical presence and assumes that the physical heart promises emotional ability.
 43. Richard Witt calls Miss Havisham Estella's "double" (151).
 44. Miss Havisham does redirect something, love or obsession, to Estella, but she refuses to allow anyone else to read her as having done so. She insists upon reading herself as hurt by her ever-present thwarted love for Compeyson. She speaks of her love as continuing and futile, as she eagerly watches those she speaks to to monitor their reaction. Her powerful, watching, moving eyes belie the love she claims to feel.
 45. When odd women are treated well in the nineteenth-century, they are treated as women who were loved, but who had to learn to live with the loss of a lover. Often, they are seen to sacrifice love in duty to another. For example, Miss Mattie in Gaskell's *Cranford* is an odd woman in love, as is Miss Benton in *Ruth*, who sacrifices her love for the opportunity to take care of her invalid brother.
 46. I like Andrea Gilchrist's definition of the grotesque. She posits, "The fusions in the grotesque world are unnatural fusions of *natural* objects; space and time can only be distorted because we apprehend *natural* spatial and temporal relationships. And our final response to the grotesque must involve our acknowledgement that the estranged world it presents is and is not the very world in which we are at home" (75). Presenting Miss Havisham and Estella as grotesque women, Dickens is able to use nineteenth-century assumptions about femininity in his novel as givens that his reader is familiar with at the same time that he makes the reader very uncomfortable with them.
 47. Sara Thornton notes, "Being shoeless is a sign of some aberrant passion and we see Miss Havisham with her one shoe as a signal of her fall from grace and her rejection of patriarchal norms" (106).
 48. Of course, this is referring to Laura Mulvey's work on the cinematic gaze, which seems appropriate as Dickens in this text is using what I consider a cinematic approach to participation in the trappings of romance and lovesickness.
 49. A decade before Dickens serializes *Great Expectations* in *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, Elizabeth Barrett Browning reverses the masculine/feminine roles,

causing the female speaker of love poetry to take the more active masculine role of the Petrarchan lover.

50. See also Marianne's mother's thinking she needs a diversion and Porter and Porter calling distraction a form of treatment for mild illness.

51. "So! She said, without being startled or surprised; "the days have worn away, have they?"

"Yes, ma'am. To-day is –"

"There, there, there!" with the impatient movement of her fingers.

"I don't want to know. Are you ready to play?" (83)

Tambling asserts that "madness for Dickens has a relationship to time past, and the desire to arrest it, and a reading of madness in Dickens must take this into account, along with the sense that the instability of sexual difference becomes more of a crisis within nineteenth century constructions of identity, and relates also to hysteria" (71).

52. Sheehan considers Miss Havisham "desperate to die, to reunite her body with the empty emotional state she embraced 25 years earlier. But her perpetual self-pity (and indirect acts of vengeance) operate as a kind of perverse life-support system. Her revenge is directed not just against human passion but *life itself*, she becomes a connoisseur of death, mastering it without having actually to die first" (99). However, I argue that she does not desire the end of her life as much as she is insistent that the end of her life be read as a direct result of the trauma she sustained on her wedding day.
53. Her desire is to cause the pain to her lover that she inevitably only causes to others. Sara Thornton states, "She appears to her brother Arthur as a bleeding bride—a grotesque virgin with a bleeding sacred heart carrying a shroud" (105). Tambling notes that "Arthur's hysteria masculinizes his sister and feminizes him and it implicitly makes Satis House prisonous but, much more, a madhouse" (75). Why does Arthur's hystericization and Miss Havisham's powerful curse read as her masculinization? Even in her moment of greatest haunting, it is in the figure of a virgin, a bride, and Madonna – all feminine sources of power.
54. Frost writes, "Miss Havisham can control her own world within the grounds of Satis House and the fear is that she may be able to spread her corrosive influence beyond the garden walls" (17).
55. Conduct books teach girls to consider whom they are about to marry and dispel the myth that "reformed rakes make good husbands," but girls are not given access to men in their everyday lives or around their hobbies, so they would have

- little idea how much a man drinks, gambles, lounges, or works if she had no male protector to see for himself.
56. Estella is discussed as being like Frankenstein's monster in Stewart Justman's "'I Am What You Made Me': The Fabrication Metaphor and Its Significance."
 57. Peter Scheckner also considers Miss Havisham "driven mad" by her jilting (240), and "completely crazy" because she is "too passionate" (245).
 58. Joe also understands that Mrs. Joe is wrong, yet he insists on calling her a "fine figure of a woman;" A. L. French points to the significance of Pip's reaction to Joe's story, which is one in which Pip is "conscious that I was looking up to Joe in my heart." Pip is prepared for honoring the woman who abuses him from Joe, who believes that his physical strength and natural masculine brutality must be avoided at all cost, as well as from Miss Havisham, who seeks to injure the male sex through the constant presentation of her injury.
 59. They may also be so ready to believe anything about her because she is a rich woman, which might be synonymous with her lovesickness – for she would not be lovesick if she had not been rich first. Sheehan notes that in *Great Expectations*, "[a]ssociations are fixed between money and unhappiness" (100).
 60. Margaret Flanders Darby mentions that neither Pip nor Miss Havisham listen to Estella (216).
 61. Acknowledging St. Augustine as the first to notice this structure, Dino S. Cervigni notes that Petrarch's poems to Laura are "structured as a macro-discourse: a complex utterance consisting of 366 poems and comprising a speaker, a hearer, and the speaker's intention of influencing the hearer" (105). Cervigni also notes that the speaker fails to make connections with multiple hearers (including Laura) until the last poem in which he finally addresses Mary, who is not previously addressed. Cervigni claims, "Mary subsumes and totally transforms all previous addresses to human beings as well as all previous references to Christ, God, and all other supernatural elements running through the I's macro-discourse. Mary, therefore, becomes the exemplary intermediary who is capable of empowering the Petrarch-persona to arrive at the other whom he had sought and always failed to reach throughout the *Rime sparse*" (111). In a Petrarchan framework, Pip's point-of-view would have to experience the difficulty of language to connect with another, particularly the object of his affection. He would anticipate a failure of communication with his love that would eventually be mediated by a virgin mother, Miss Havisham, who has the power to make him heard.
 62. Paul Sheehan insists upon calling Miss Havisham "a pathetic, lovelorn victim of another's greed" (102), even though he earlier acknowledges "her perpetual self-pity (and indirect acts of vengeance)" (99). Critics acknowledge that Miss Havisham no longer feels love, yet they label her as "lovelorn" and as an opposite to Estella.

63. In “Beating and Cringing: *Great Expectations*,” A. L. French notes that both Pip and Estella are determined by the prominent adults in their lives, claiming the novel is “full of situations in which parents, or their substitutes, dominate and indeed determine their children—not merely what the children do but also what they are” (148) and “Estella, like Pip, is the victim, or beneficiary, of another’s wishes; although in her case there seems little prospect of her being able to free herself from Miss Havisham’s influence” (148).
64. Sarah Kay discusses the work of Gaston Paris, a French medievalist, who defined courtly love as a love that “entails furtiveness because of the risk of discovery, especially for a woman; a consequent raising of her prestige *vis-à-vis* her lover, whom she may treat capriciously; the responding willingness of the man to demonstrate his devotion by deeds of prowess; and adherence to a code of manners or rules” (84). Dickens is not writing a romance, but he borrows from the tradition. Pip is furtive about his intentions so that he does not pressure Estella. Class is an issue, but Pip hopes to raise his prestige by winning Estella. The rest of the romance tradition is useful to Pip, who is authoring his own romance here, and in doing so, hoping for an eventual reward of Estella after her “capriciousness” and his appropriate trials are ended.
65. Witt writes of Pip’s rescue of Miss Havisham from the fire that “the use that Pip puts it [his great coat] to is a kind of chivalrous act which—successful or not—will go a long way towards making a man of him” (156).
66. Thornton notes, “The burning symbolizes Dickens’s attempts in his writing to impose some sort of order on the chaos—the wrestling with the burning female figure is the artist’s ‘Fire-Baptism’ in which he sets to rights through the destruction of an old lady the ills of society” (112).
67. Peter Scheckner writes, “When women deviate from a sexual norm, when they overreach themselves, or become too intense about anything, the social status quo for Dickens is threatened” (245).

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